MARCH 2000

NEA Today

The Magazine of the National Education Association

Who's the Mentor?

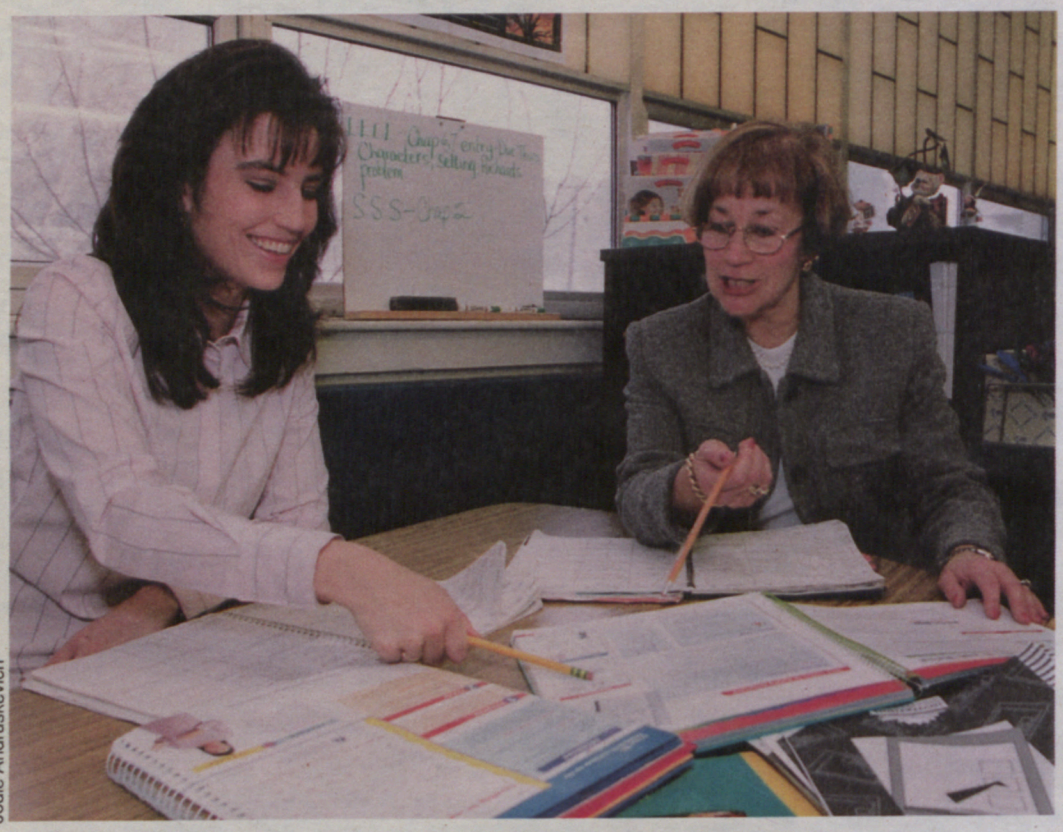
Karen Jensen is learning important lessons about reaching kids from an unexpected source.

See page 8

NEA Today

Volume 18 • Number 6

COVER STORY



Jodie Andruskevich

Who's the Mentor?
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New Hampshire teacher Kelly Sedgley, left, may have been fresh out of college last year. But she had plenty of value to offer her new colleague, veteran teacher Sue Mason.

Cover photo by Peter Yates/Saba

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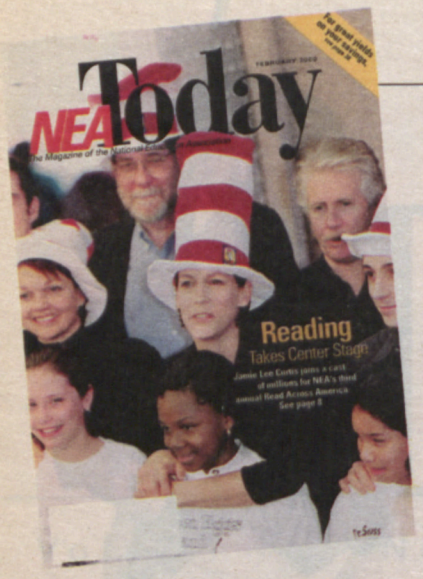


Letters

STUDENT RIGHTS

I am as appalled as anyone by student violence in schools, and I understand the need for procedures to prevent such violence. However, some of those preventive measures seem to be trampling the First Amendment rights of students (Rights Watch, February).

I'm even more appalled at the reaction of NEA, as expressed in your sidebar on police reaction. How can you encourage school officials to "take action if they believe that a student might commit acts of violence"? Since when can we punish people for what someone believes they might do? Have we flushed the Constitution down the drain?

When students are arrested, jailed, and even convicted for expressing their thoughts in diaries, journals, and student writing, we've crossed the line. The result will be a generation of students who have learned not to put such thoughts on paper, but to keep them to themselves. And then we'll have no clues about what action students are considering.

Isn't it more logical to use such writings as a reason to monitor the behavior of these students? And I make a distinction between monitoring and "taking action."

Frank Witty
Winter Springs, Florida

IN PRAISE OF MENTORS

I think the Beginning Teacher Network Program that a Missouri district has implemented (Learning, February) is an excellent way to help first-year teachers receive the support and direction they need.

I was involved in a mentorship program my first year of teaching and found it extremely beneficial.

The program gave me the opportunity to share my struggles and joys with a veteran teacher who offered endless tips and tricks that helped me complete my first-year with great success.

Mentorship programs can offer positive growth for first year teachers, veteran teachers, and the school district as a whole.

Jennifer Bolluyt
Fargo, North Dakota

READING DEBATE

RE: Margaret Patterson, Ph.D. (February Debate).

I don't get it. How can someone live in today's educational system and claim that there is only one "zippit" who doesn't tap? I want one of those classes. I want to know how anyone who teaches is not a teacher of reading.

Whether it's math or fiction, economics or E-mail, everyone teaches reading. And the more trained we are, the better. It doesn't take a stack of classes, just do a little reading of your own.

What is more important than any subject taught? My take is: If a student doesn't read, the rest is wasted motion.

Randall Youngren
Ellensburg, Washington

LIBRARIANS AND READING

As a full-time school librarian and a part-time public librarian, I was surprised to see no mention of librarians in your (February) "Read Across America" article. We school librarians are teachers too and an integral part of reading in every school. More than one study has proven the positive link between school librarians and student achievement.

Where do you think classroom teachers and administrators turn to for help in carrying out such reading programs? I think you owe every school librarian an apology for this omission.

Stephanie Bucalo
North Babylon, New York

WRONG NUMBER?

Never have I been so outraged as I am now after reading Lynn Bonsey's article ("Dial T for Teacher," January). I cannot believe that the NEA would feature such an anti-union article.

Since when is it a good idea to work for nothing? Your union should be explaining to you that our time is valuable! We do not work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Every activity mentioned in this article, from giving advice to changing due dates on assignments, can and should be accomplished during the school day.

Your lawyer bills you for his time. Your doctor bills you for his time. Your plumber bills you for his time. So it must be for teachers!

If this is the "New Unionism" then we need new leadership at the top of the NEA!

Michael Wyler
Plainview, New York

I teach physics and chemistry at a small high school in DeWitt, Arkansas. I encourage my students to call me at home. Also, I have constructed my own Web page (www.webspinners.futura.net/apurdy) where my students can get daily assignments, grades, and other information.

All of my students do not take advantage of the Web page, but those who do love it. The parents also like it because they have access to grades without having to go through the school, and they can E-mail me any questions they have.

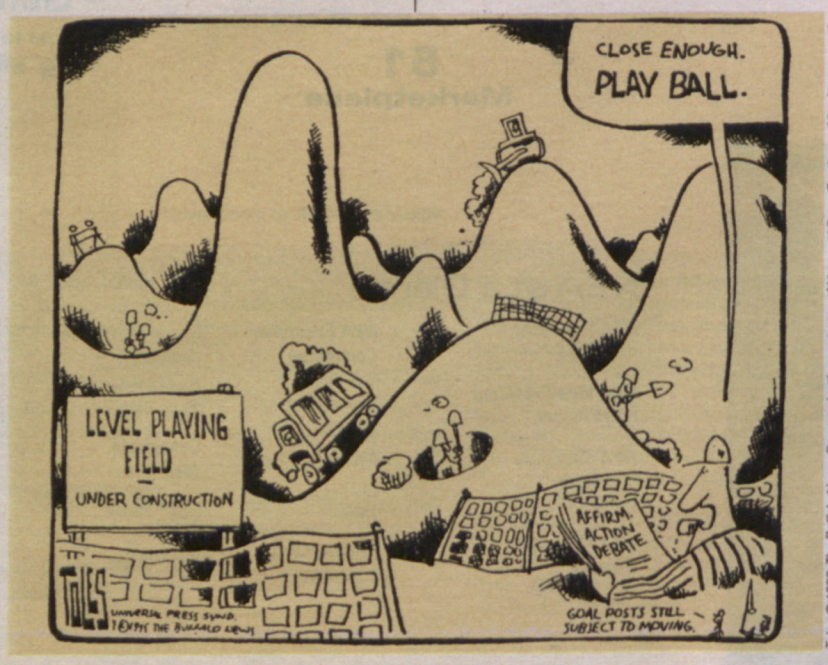
Audrey Purdy
DeWitt, Arkansas

I read with interest Lynn Bonsey's article suggesting benefit from giving out a teacher's home phone number. I can't think of a worse idea. Perhaps her rural Maine setting makes this idea somewhat safer for her. However, I think this raises some very real personal safety issues for many teachers.

If a student doesn't understand problem #3 on page 117, is it really so important that the student call a teacher at home rather than wait until the next day?

I suggest a voice mail system similar to one my PTA has paid for. The parent or student can key a teacher's extension to hear assignments or leave a question.

Mark Heinze
San Diego, California



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VOUCHERS

I can understand the position some take to fight school vouchers with all their might, but we have to be realistic. Home schooling is growing. Vouchers are gathering support from parents. Private schools are becoming state-chartered, and parents are sending kids to them.

We cannot ignore the message these parents are sending us. Every time public school proponents yell about chartered schools, vouchers, and home schooling, they are shooting themselves in the foot and antagonizing the parents we want to bring their kids back into the public schools.

What happened to the very sound principle of "Copy Success"? We have to look at these school alternatives and see why they are succeeding. If public schools don't eat some humble pie soon, they will be eating crow.

Caroline Zimmermann
Indio, California

ON GORE'S ENDORSEMENT

I am extremely distressed at NEA's decision to endorse Al Gore for President at this early stage ("On the Issues," January 2000). I believe that NEA's "instant" jump to Democrats, Gore in particular, is very shortsighted and hurts NEA and teachers by alienating a high percentage of teachers and parents who do not believe "tax and spend" liberalism is the panacea for American education.

Most American taxpayers support good teachers and strong education programs, but there is also an entrenched belief in "local control" for public schools. Unfortunately, "local control" is not a tenet of "tax and spend" liberals, such as Gore.

Robert Oldfield
Mesa, Arizona

TEACHER PREPARATION

While I understand the value in having a diversity of opinions expressed in *NEA Today*, I can't let Leon Botstein's outrageous comments go unanswered (Learning, January 2000).

He strikes me as just one more non-practitioner who presumes to understand—and to prescribe the solution for—the lack of respect teachers get. His answer: more subject matter training.

I would suggest that teachers garner so little respect because the people we work with—children—get so little respect in our society.

How can we recruit more good people into teaching? His solution is yet another version of the answer we hear over and over: Money! What gifted teacher does any us know who is in this for the money?

I would like to postpone hearing from Dr. Botstein until he has spent a month or so in a K-12 classroom, such as with my alternative-ed high schoolers. If he managed to continue

for a whole year, I'd actually be interested in what he had to say.

Mark Kennedy
Ontario, California

TEACHERS OF THE MILLENNIUM

When I became a teacher in 1966, I used to joke with my parents that I planned to be named "Teacher of the Year" by 1970, "Teacher of the Decade" by 1980, and "Teacher of the Century" by the year 2000.

Well, I've never even been declared "Teacher of the Month," but I think it's time (even if it's really a year early) to begin the process of selecting the "Teacher of the Millennium." Here are some nominees:

Annie Sullivan
Horace Mann
John Dewey
Maria Montessori
Mahatma Ghandi
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Mary McLeod Bethune
B. F. Skinner
Jaime Escalante
John Holt

Richard Siegelman
East Norwich, New York

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

PARAPROFESSIONALS

To the teacher who responded to complaints of a teacher's aide who wanted more money and prestige (November 1999), I am a tutor at a middle school. As such I am expected to have extensive knowledge on a variety of subjects on tap for whichever grade student might seek my assistance.

I also have a B.A. in history and, until my final semester, was an education major. In fact, the only thing keeping me from my certification is the student teaching requirement. Yet, according to that particular teacher who "spent $40,000" obtaining a B.A., I am not worthy of just compensation for my duties. I wonder how many other "professionals" are working for substandard wages as aides or tutors, either for the love of kids, or scarcity of jobs or both.

Robert Sparks
Canova, South Dakota

MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM

I applaud Bill Farmer for having discovered the value of music in regular class procedure (Problems and Solutions, January).

I taught social studies for 30 years in Baltimore County, Maryland. Music was a constant in my classes. Over the years I have accumulated, at my own expense, a library of over 23,000 songs from which to draw.

Hearing a wide variety of music helped open previously closed minds to other kinds of music than what was currently considered "cool."

David Clements
Freeland, Maryland

EZC READER

You recently printed a portion of the information I sent about a reading tool, the "EZC READER," that I created to help dyslexic children read (Idea Exchange, January). Although I do appreciate the comments, I need to bring a couple of points to your attention. My address is in Michigan, not Missouri.

Also, I am under contract with "Really Good Stuff," a school supply company based in Bosford, Connecticut. Omitting that information, as well as the Web site where this tool can be ordered (www.reallygoodstuff.com), is an infringement to their patent.

Sharon Cannon
Escanaba, Michigan

Editor's note: We regret the error.

CHILD LABOR

To "Out of Place" who took exception to the article on child labor in the November issue: If you honestly wish "the best for all peoples," as you claimed, before you request that we not "apply American standards to other countries," would you propose we teach our children double standards?

Aren't all people entitled to the same freedoms we enjoy, or are we more priviledged than others?

Does having more than our share of the world's wealth entitle us to more than our share of the world's freedom, justice, equality, and human rights?

Who will teach our children to value each other and these principles if American professional educators do not?

Certainly they won't learn it from the American business community, which is relocating more and more facilities to countries with weaker labor protection laws.

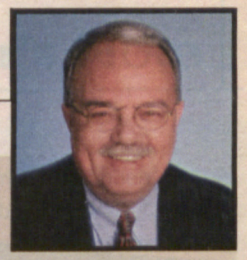
In those countries, they can take advantage of cheap labor and are not forced to "apply American standards" by law, only by conscience.

We must look beyond issues that affect us directly, or how can we teach our children to be responsible citizens of the world?

Julie Fitzpatrick
Madison, Wisconsin

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE



Tough and Tender, Please

Children need better schools —and better childhoods

For teachers, miracles are an everyday fact of life. These children we teach, these beautiful, sometimes exasperating children, are a lot more to us than a test score—they are miracles in progress. Each one is an individual, with a name, a face, and an untapped universe of potential. When we see the light of learning dawn in a child's eyes, our teacherly heart beats quicker.

But it is also a grim fact of teacher life that there are students we never reach. Some children's lives are on a negative trajectory that we are unable to redirect, despite our best efforts. And these are the children who haunt us.

I am convinced that a major reason one out of three new teachers leaves our profession within five years is that they are overwhelmed by the socioeconomic reality of today's classroom, especially in urban school districts.

The highly respected Annie E. Casey Foundation has pinpointed "six family risk factors" for children: one parent absent from the home; the head of household not a high school graduate; family income below the poverty line; no parent with a full-time, year-round job; chronic dependence on public assistance; and no health insurance.

When childred bear the burden of four or more of these disadvantages, they are at "great risk." The chances of such children becoming productive adults in the American mainstream are slim.

"Some children's lives are on a negative trajectory that we are unable to redirect, despite our best efforts. And these are the children who haunt us."

Through the heroic efforts of family members and teachers, some of these children will overcome the odds. The vast majority will not.

The "high-risk" four-year-old is twice as likely to have difficulty concentrating as the no-risk child, three times as likely to have trouble communicating, and nearly five times as likely to be in less than good health.

This child needs help. It is one thing to deny help to adults, arguing that they've made their choices and now must live with the consequences. It is another to deny four-year-old children the health care, social services, and preschool education they need.

It is, I believe, downright perverse to subject these kids to "get tough" school policies unless we are willing to provide them with the means to succeed. Otherwise, ending social-promotion, imposing zero tolerance, and requiring students to pass high-stakes tests will only serve to label these young people as failures.

It is doubly perverse to eliminate affirmative action under the pretense that our society has leveled the playing field. Leveled the playing field? Tell it to the child with asthma or an ear infection that goes untreated. Tell it to the child growing up in a drug-ridden, violence-torn neighborhood.

Yes, the 9 million-plus high-risk children growing up in America today, 75 percent of whom are minority, need better schools, desperately. They need qualified teachers in every classroom, intensive reading programs, and smaller classes. They need up-to-date textbooks and challenging curricula. There is no earthly reason why every child in our prosperous nation should not attend a school as good as the best suburban school.

But these children need something else that's equally vital—a better childhood. They need a childhood that nurtures rather than kills dreams, a childhood that gives their teachers the opportunity to transform dreams into miracles.

Comments? You can E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org. If you would like a response, please be sure to include your name and NEA local affiliate.

Visit the FamilyEducation Network booth at the upcoming NAESP, ASCD, NSBA, CEC, and SchoolTech Expo conferences.

Word Problem #11

If Mrs. Crabtree spends one hour developing a website with Class webCreate, and that saves her one hour per student per week, how happy will Mrs. Crabtree be at the end of the week?

Creating a class website is a great idea. But where can you find the time to make that happen, not to mention the technology? Introducing Class webCreate from myschoolonline.com. If you can type, you can put your classroom online in less than an hour — and it's absolutely free. You'll use 6 custom webpage creators, including homework, calendar, student showcase, and class newsletter that make creating a class website quick and easy. Go to **www.myschoolonline.com/class** and spend a little time creating something that can make a big difference.

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Try Class webCreate right now and get a $25 gift certificate good toward school supplies from JuneBox.com

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Trading the Boardroom for the Classroom

Frustrated? Tired? Thinking about greener pastures in the corporate world? This New Jersey teacher has been there.

BY FRANK VERDUCCI, JR.

It's late in the afternoon, your classroom feels like an oven, and your head is still spinning from that post-observation conference with your principal. To top things off, your students just can't seem to settle into their seats and focus on your lesson. You find yourself daydreaming that there must be a better way to make a living.

But before you conjure up visions of a corner office and a BMW in the parking lot, stop and ask yourself a simple question: "Do I really believe the grass is greener on the other side of the fence?"

Chances are, this question will help snap you back to reality. You'll recognize that, even with all the monetary inducements corporate America may hold, nothing can measure the satisfaction you feel when one (hopefully more!) of your young troops has mastered a lesson.

I didn't always believe this. I spent the first 10 years of my working career struggling up the corporate ladder. I spent countless weekends at the office, worrying about the volume of my work and all the deadlines that had to be met.

Working long hours, with little family life or leisure time, began to take its toll. I found myself second-guessing the worth of my contribution to society. It was time to reassess what was important in life, because the track I was on was not providing any satisfaction.

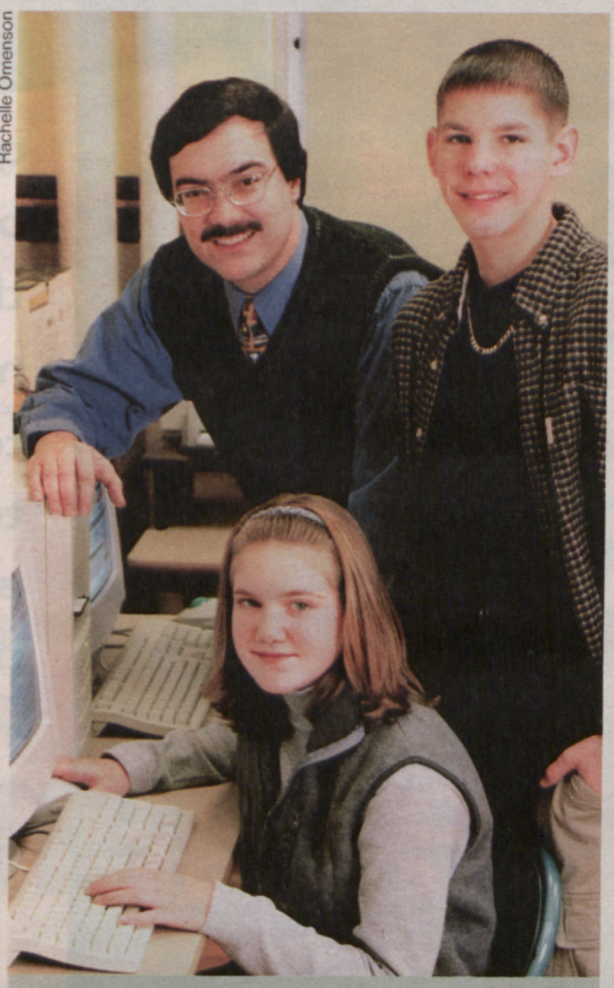
I had always liked working with children and found their energy contagious. So I started wondering if I could go back and correct my career choice mistake.

Coming from a family of educators, I got lots of guidance and suggestions, not all of them positive. I was even warned that it would be difficult entering a field that frowned upon those who had chosen an alternate route.

But I was not dissuaded. Just because I didn't go the traditional route didn't mean I couldn't teach! I believed the experience of working in corporate America would benefit the students who wanted to learn more about the world around them.

Unfortunately, many prospective school employers didn't want to take a chance on an alternate-route teacher, and it took almost a year to find a public school position.

Rachelle Omenson



Unhappy with his job in business, Frank Verducci, Jr. switched careers and now teaches middle school students in New Jersey. Pictured with him are Roselle Park students Danielle DiDonato and George Mundy.

I finally did obtain my certification and find a job. But then, once on the job, I was shocked at some of the individuals I encountered. You know, the Monday morning complainer who can't face another week with "Johnny," the lunchroom gossips, and educators who were generally just plain negative.

I spent many a morning with my mentor discussing how disappointed I was at the attitudes I was hearing. These teachers were the keys to our country's future, I thought. Surely, they couldn't really feel such despair and contempt for their chosen profession? Why stay in teaching, I wondered, if you are that unhappy?

Over time, I came to realize that teaching isn't any different from working in the corporate world. The same lessons I had learned in business were still true in teaching, just on a different scale.

The politics of the education community are as fierce as the backstabbing and jealousy that I witnessed in the corporate world.

Still, I knew I had made the right choice to become a teacher. The satisfaction of working with the kids far outweighed the negative aspects of working in a profession that has seen more than its share of criticism.

My weekends are more enjoyable now, but I still spend time worrying—worrying about the impact I have on my adolescent charges. The responsibility we have as teachers is simply awesome.

Let's never forget that and let's focus our energies on making things better for all our students. ✔

Frank Verducci, Jr. has taught computer technology and reading to sixth and seventh graders at Roselle Park Middle School in Roselle Park, New Jersey for four years. His E-mail address: FVTEACH@aol.com.

If you haven't yet been on the Web, at www.nea.org/neatoday, to check the online version of *NEA Today*, you're missing the extra perspective on education that our online site is now delivering.

Online, you'll find access to the entire current issue of *NEA Today*, and the contents—text and most photos and graphics—are available within just a few days after the print version goes to press.

Bill Fischer
editor

But *NEA Today Online —NEATO*, for short—isn't just a mirror reflection of the print version of *NEA Today*.

"We try to add new material to the site and not just repeat the print version," as NEATO editor Bonnie Gardner puts it.

In one recent issue, for instance, *NEA Today* ran a cover story about using technology in the classroom.

Space in the print version necessarily limited the length of the story and the number of resource leads we could provide. Online, we faced no such limitation, so we were able to offer considerably more technology help than we could in print.

The online version of *NEA Today* also offers interactive features that can't be duplicated in print, such as the opportunity to vote on each issue's debate question. Once you cast your vote, you can get an immediate total vote tally.

Finding articles from previous issues is also quick and easy with our online version. Just click on the *NEA Today* archives and you'll be taken to a searchable collection of the last three year's worth of issues.

Have a great article idea for staff to consider? That's another reason to come visit us online. Our *NEATO* Web site features a clearly marked space where you can key in your story ideas, and another place where you can E-mail a letter to the editor.

You can also change your address online. And, if you'd like, *NEATO* will even let you know when new features are added to the site.

Bill Fischer

Who's the Mentor?

Everyone knows veteran educators have a lot to offer new teachers. But new teachers, despite their lack of experience, often have ideas that even the most veteran teacher can put to good use. Just ask these NEA members.

Karen Jensen is about as veteran a teacher as you can be. She's taught for 28 years.

But Jensen, a French teacher in Bellevue, Washington, feels she's still learning her craft—and probably always will be. And she's not afraid to admit that she's learning a lot from a source many veteran teachers would never think of seriously tapping: her younger colleagues.

Allison Dan is just one of the new teachers who've impressed Jensen with their fresh approaches. Dan showed Jensen a technique she learned at college in Wisconsin.

The technique, called "Total Physical Response," aims to help students learn a foreign language by associating words with physical action. To learn the word for "walk," a student says the word, then takes a step. For "elephant," a student might wave an arm like a trunk.

"Sometimes it looks a bit cornball," smiles Jensen, "but it's very effective."

Beginning teacher Kelly Sedgley and veteran Sue Mason made a great team. Each learned from the other and applied that knowledge to the classroom.

Photos by Jodie Andruskevich

Peter Yates

NEA member Karen Jensen knows her craft so well she coaches other teachers. But she's learned some new tricks from first-year teacher Allison Dan (cover).

Over the next 10 years, the U.S. Department of Education estimates, 2 million new teachers will be entering classrooms. Many of these teachers—like Allison Dan—will enter their new profession well prepared and knowledgeable. They'll have a lot to offer.

Will these new teachers get a chance to share what they've learned? Or will they be advised to forget everything they learned in school about teaching because they're now in the "real world"?

The answer will probably vary by district. In many schools, veterans are quite willing to credit new teachers with enthusiasm—and maybe some computer smarts. But, beyond that, a lot of veterans simply assume that most new teachers don't have a clue.

This assumption, experienced teachers like Karen Jensen believe, can short-circuit some valuable learning opportunities. Many new teachers, she notes, come out of excellent preparation programs and arrive with good, practical ideas.

Jensen's new colleague, Allison Dan, is a case in point. Her training included a year of immersion in France, followed by two years of an intensive teacher prep program. In each of the two years, Dan had a semester of coursework combined with classroom observation, followed by a semester of full-time student teaching. While student-teaching, Dan also took night courses. All along, she got plenty of help from skillful, cooperating teachers.

Not all teacher education experiences, of course, come close to matching the rigor of Allison Dan's program, one reason why NEA is working closely with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education to upgrade teacher education. (*See FYI, page 31.*)

This NEA-backed effort is making a difference. Kelly Sedgley, a graduate from an NCATE-accredited program at the University of New Hampshire, is living proof. Last year, her first, Sedgley won the prestigious Sallie Mae award for beginning teachers, an honor given to only one teacher per state.

At UNH, Sedgley learned to combine science with the rest of the primary curriculum, a background that enabled her to make a big contribution last year to the work of veteran New Hampshire teacher Sue Mason.

Mason and Sedgley worked as a team at the Epsom Central School near Concord. Sedgley, says Mason, helped the team integrate dinosaurs, beavers, and reptiles with math, reading, and poetry.

"Our minds were always feeding off one another," says Mason. "Kelly helped us get a fresh start on everything."

When partnerships between new and veteran teachers click, it can be hard to remember where good ideas come from. In Glendale, Arizona, high school teacher Bart Bondeson started his career with an orientation toward keeping objectives clear, something he learned at Florida International, an NCATE-accredited institution.

Bondeson begins each lesson with a short activity that students work on as soon as the class bell rings, which gets them straight into the topic of the day. Each lesson has one objective.

"She has the ability to take a lesson and make it more interactive, more interesting. She's so helpful—and I love to get help because I need it."

"If you have eight objectives," he notes, "you're likely not to reach any."

Bondeson says his mentor, veteran teacher Donnis Deever, strongly reinforced this approach.

For her part, Deever, a 30-year teaching veteran, says she has learned a great deal from her younger colleague about the importance of seeing each lesson through the eyes of the students.

But Bondeson insists he learned that from his experienced colleague.

Who's right? It really doesn't matter. Add a well-trained new teacher to a school where veterans are eager to share what they know—and learn what they don't—and good things happen. ✔

Unprepared New Hires An Unacceptable Reality

***NEA Today* this month is featuring some great new teachers who received excellent preparation from their teacher education programs.**

Not all beginners in the profession are so fortunate. Some 50,000 individuals who lack appropriate training enter the teaching force annually on emergency or substandard licenses, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

These unprepared teachers make up more than a quarter of newly hired teachers. About 15 percent are hired with emergency, temporary, or provisional licenses, and another 12 percent are hired with no license at all.

These unprepared teachers are not distributed evenly across the country. High-poverty schools are much more likely to have unprepared teachers in front of their classrooms than schools in more affluent areas.

The pressure to hire still more unprepared teachers is growing, as student enrollments rise and enormous numbers of experienced teachers reach retirement age. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley estimates that America will need more than 2 million new teachers over the next decade.

Also adding to the growing demand for new teachers: the growing realization that children learn better in small classes. California needed 20,000 additional teachers to meet its goals for reducing class size in grades K-3.

Currently, according to *Education Week*, 30,000 out of California's 270,000 teachers are working with emergency permits.

NEA and NEA affiliates are working on many fronts to promote high standards for teacher preparation and to help new teachers through the difficult first few years.

Here's one innovative approach: The Texas State Teachers Association recently won passage of a state law that requires school districts to tell parents when their children are taught for more than 30 days by someone who lacks full teaching credentials.

Tips for new teachers

Dee Marvin

How can you get respect for your ideas without making everybody think you're incredibly arrogant? We asked NEA members who won the Sallie Mae First Class Teacher Award for beginning teachers in 1999. The award goes to one teacher in each state.

Demonstrate your ideas instead of talking about them. As a first year or new teacher, your actions speak louder than being vocal.

Lisa Wilson
Smyrna High School
Smyrna, Delaware

Don't go in thinking you're better than everybody. Take suggestions and constructive criticism. Don't take criticism personally. Even after 30 years, you'll still be learning.

If you hear teachers talking about something they're doing in class and you have something to suggest, you might say, "I did this in college. If you want to try it, I have information." Leave it to them to come to you.

Jennifer Renda
Macopin Middle School
West Milford, New Jersey

Have an open mind to see what veteran teachers are doing already. Ask questions. Say, "What do you think of this idea?" You can get benefit of their experience. They'll feel valued and you'll be sharing your ideas.

Kelly Sedgley
Epsom Central School
Epsom, New Hampshire

Tips for experienced teachers

Kevin Brusie

NEA member Susan Walters, a former English teacher, coordinates the work of University of Southern Maine faculty, mentor-teachers, and student-teachers at Wells Junior High School near Concord, New Hampshire. Here's her advice to experienced teachers on how to get the most from the good ideas of newcomers to the profession:

- Approach your work with new teachers from a position of curiosity, not with an attitude of knowing all the answers.
- Build trust through active, empathic listening and questioning.
- Invite new teachers to observe you and give you feedback.
- Explain what you do and why. Or ask a new teacher to tell you why they think you did something. Talking about it will help both of you.
- Be willing to support and experiment with a new teacher's ideas.
- Recognize new teachers' areas of expertise. Many have useful career experience or interests.
- If you are going to be a formal mentor, enroll in a course designed for that role. Being a good teacher of children doesn't always translate into working well with adult learners.
- As teachers work with new teachers, they gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of what they do. Value your expertise and be proud of the contributions you are making.

Rx for Teacher Isolation: The Professional Development School

In what kind of institution can you see university professors going on rounds with aspiring young professionals, teaching them how to handle real-world situations?

One answer is the teaching hospital, the site where almost all young doctors truly learn their craft.

Another answer, considerably less familiar, is the "professional development school"—or PDS for short. Professional development schools are high-quality public schools that feature a teacher education program modeled on the notion of a teaching hospital.

In a PDS, advocates of professional development schools believe, everyone learns better—student-teachers, beginning teachers, veteran teachers, university faculty, and, certainly, school children.

The main idea behind the PDS model: Student-teachers can and should do much of their learning on-site in schools, even before they're ready for practice teaching.

In a PDS situation, some of a student's collegiate education classes are held at the school itself. Professors come over from the university to the public school to teach their classes.

Veteran teachers who work at the school, meanwhile, are on hand to give the student-teachers the benefit of their solid, practical knowledge. To see a teaching idea in action, student-teachers can often just walk down the hall.

Student-teachers at a professional development school, school faculty, and university faculty "go on rounds" together, observing classes and discussing what they see. The PDS model, in short, bridges the gap between theory and practice.

And because teachers in a professional development school get used to watching and talking about each other's work, a PDS also helps bridge the gap between classroom and classroom.

To build a PDS, you need three partners: the school district administration, a postsecondary education program, and local teachers, according to NEA member Robert Pines, a professor of education at Montclair State University in New Jersey and coordinator of a PDS network sponsored by NEA's Teacher Education Initiative.

NEA member Richard Clark, a researcher with the National Network for Educational Renewal, has studied the cost of running a PDS.

Clark, who works at the University of Washington in Seattle, says launching a PDS usually costs $25,000 to $50,000 per school. Beyond that, a PDS doesn't cost significantly more to operate than traditional teacher ed programs.

"If you're spending the money to do it right, a professional development school shouldn't cost much more," says Clark. "You just reallocate the money you've been spending on snake oil consultants."

RESOURCES

Teaching to Teach is a new NEA Professional Library book that chronicles the stories of NEA-backed professional development schools. You can read the book online, free, at www.nea.org/ books. You can order a hard copy online or by calling 800/229-4200. The price: $16.95 plus s&h. Be sure to give the item number: 2083-9-00-F.

Teaching Teachers is an NEA Professional Library videotape that shows a professional development school in action. It's episode 41 in NEA's *Teacher TV* series, item #7790-3-00-F, $15.95. See above for ordering info.

Teaching and Change, the NEA education journal, recently published a special issue on professional development schools in the fall of 1998. Single issues of *Teaching and Change* are $22, plus s&h. Call Corwin Press at 805/499-9774, fax your order to 800/4-1-SCHOOL, or send an email to order@corwinpress.com.

At the recent NEA Beginning Teachers Virtual Conference, nearly 1,000 new teachers—and many of their veteran colleagues—discussed topics ranging from managing stress to implementing student standards.

The conference was conducted from January 17 to February 7. The proceedings are now archived and available for your perusal at www.nea.org/btvc.

Should new teachers get the toughest assignments?

SUZANNE EMERY ***is an English teacher at Mira Mesa High School in San Diego. She edits the San Diego Education Association monthly newsletter,*** **The Advocate,** ***and is a member of the*** **NEA Today** ***Local Editor Advisory Board. She has taught for 34 years.***

yes

The bright faces of brand new, fully credentialed teachers ought to be in the toughest classrooms. These teachers are young, they're strong, and they have the latest in skills and pedagogy. They are not burned out, aren't about to use the same old worn lesson plans, and still believe that calling home and involving parents is possible.

Placing qualified new teachers in difficult schools is good for all parties. The kids get a fresh attitude, the new teacher gets a challenge, and the experienced teacher gets to use years of valuable resources in another location, still serving youth.

Oops! You say that new teachers are sent into schools that are overcrowded, seething, cultural melting pots—multilingual, discipline-challenged, dilapidated, and full of low-achieving, abused, and transient children with little parental support? Your point?

The school I just described is neither new nor unique. It is the site where I did my 16 weeks of student teaching 34 years ago. I was intimidated, but enthused, even when a "girl fight" broke out while we waited in the office to be introduced to our master teachers, who then escorted us across a dusty, ungrassed yard to our leaky trailer classrooms.

The people with me that day have endured. We have become the backbone of the district, experienced in just about anything that comes our way. We're able to meet challenges ignored in education textbooks, ready to teach the same old subject in as many ways as possible to develop success for the 38 or 40 kids in our classes, on whichever day they happen to attend. And you know what? I expected the challenge. I knew what was coming. I knew that I would be successful and so would my students. And, yes, my NDEA college loan was forgiven at 15 percent for each year I taught in an inner city school.

At the high school where I taught my first three years, the statistics were the same, and the career results are not embarrassing. I have become a teacher leader, and an African American counselor at that school became superintendent.

Two months ago, the graduating class of my first year students, the Class of '69, invited me to attend its 30 year reunion as an honored guest. What a blast! I knew then that that battlefield baptism had been worth it.

Make no mistake, under-qualified and emergency credentialed teachers have no place in the toughest schools. Solid training simply must be in place before putting classroom keys into the hands of new teachers.

It is unconscionable that some colleges skip pre-service exposure to inner city realities and disregard training in techniques for helping all students achieve.

As a member of the California Teachers Association's Teacher for the 21st Century workgroup, I've been looking at our state's ability to attract, recruit, and retain teachers. Of course, the best answer is two-pronged: fantastic college prep and dynamic first-year support, in California called BTSA, Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment.

By the way, I am not Pollyanna. I've taught most of my life in urban schools and I do know the problems. ✔

WENDY PATTERSON ***is a full-time mentor in the Peer Assistance and Review program in Mt. Diablo, a suburb east of San Francisco. The program is a collaborative effort between the school district and the Mt. Diablo Education Association. She has taught for 27 years.***

no

Absolutely not!

As professionals, we must never lose sight of our responsibility to provide for the academic, social, and emotional growth of all of our students.

With research showing that the critical predictor of student success is the quality of the teacher, we cannot ignore the need to support new teachers as they broaden their experiences and continue to develop their competencies.

How many potentially outstanding teachers do we lose when committed new teachers no longer view the challenges they face as a mountain they can navigate, but a deep pit from which they cannot escape?

Over 50 years ago, my father was certified to teach in New York City. He was immediately placed in one of the most difficult high schools in Harlem. His experience was not the exception, but the rule. Many new teachers did not make it. They chose to move to another school system where the climb was not so steep, or to leave the profession entirely.

My father did remain for five years, before moving to California. He retired at age 70 from a California high school.

My first five years of teaching were quite different. I started my career at a middle-class suburban elementary school with supportive parents, staff, and administrators and with students who were, for the most part, well-behaved and eager to learn.

Those first years of my career were not without struggle, but I was able to focus my energy on developing my assessment and planning skills, learning curriculum, creating materials, exploring schedules and strategies, and focusing on my students.

My next teaching placement, returning after a maternity leave, was a lower-achieving middle school with some rather complex racial and socio-economic issues. I was to teach three different classes, none of which I had ever taught before. Two of the classes contained students with serious behavior issues.

I was the fifth teacher assigned to these classes—and it was only October. I struggled to find a way to connect with my sometimes angry, often distrusting students. The first few months were painful. By the end of the day, I sometimes found myself holding back tears of frustration.

I survived—actually I began to understand and appreciate my students. I broadened my skills. I learned—and so did my students. I relied on other teachers and support people for guidance and gave thanks every day for the five years of successful teaching that gave me the confidence and the tools to make this new assignment work.

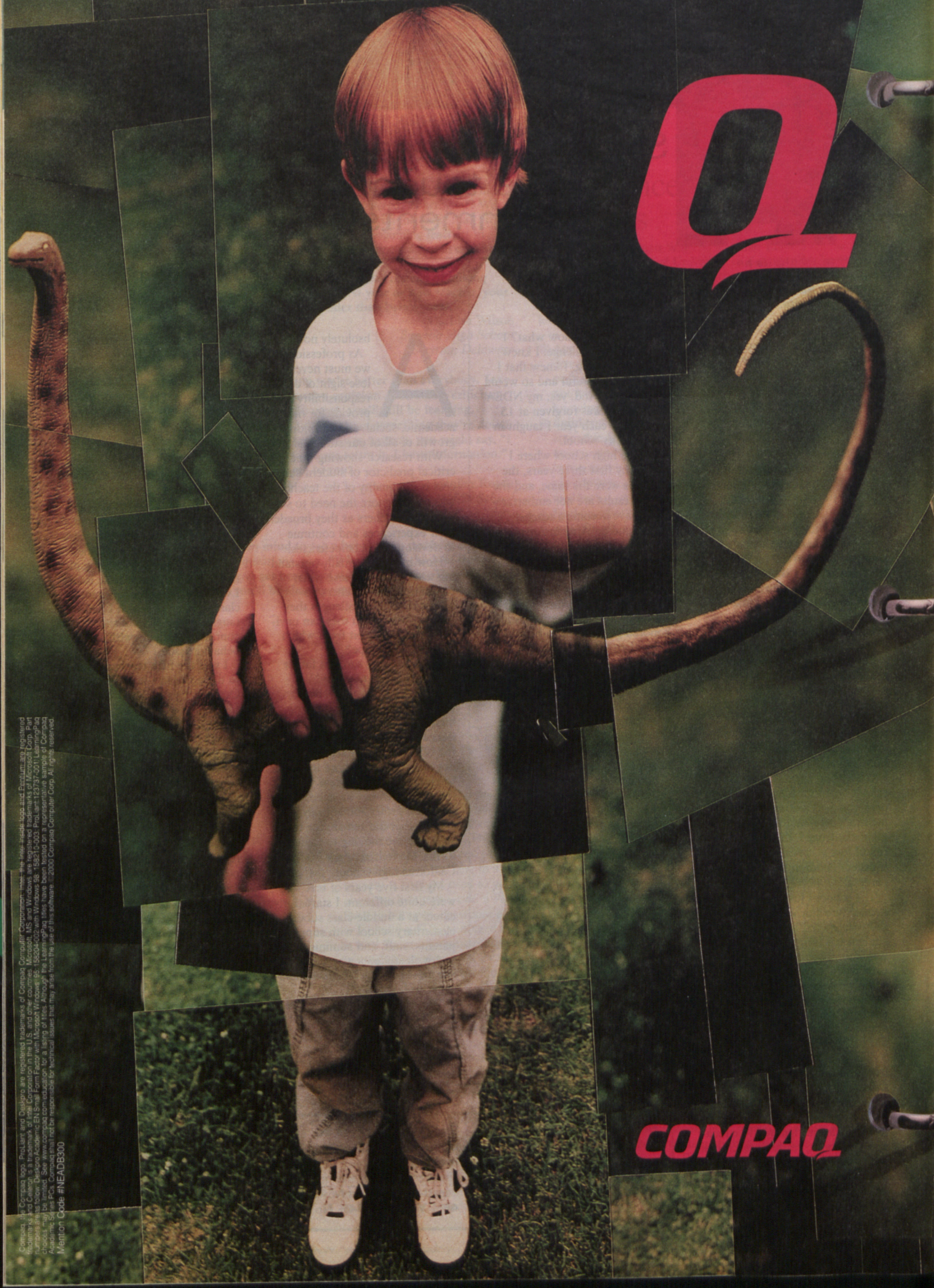
Because of the desperate need for more teachers in our schools, many districts have hired people with little or no teaching experience or preparation. These hires create difficult, though unfortunately not unusual, circumstances—and serve to reinforce the need to limit our expectations for new teachers and provide them extra support during these early years.

Asking our beginning teachers to confront unreasonable challenges promotes an endless cycle of teachers who cannot succeed and students who cannot learn. We must collectively commit to find workable answers because the price, for all of us, is too high. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Should new teachers get the toughest assignments?
To vote, check the Web at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should all teachers be trained in the teaching of reading?
The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
46% Yes **54% No**



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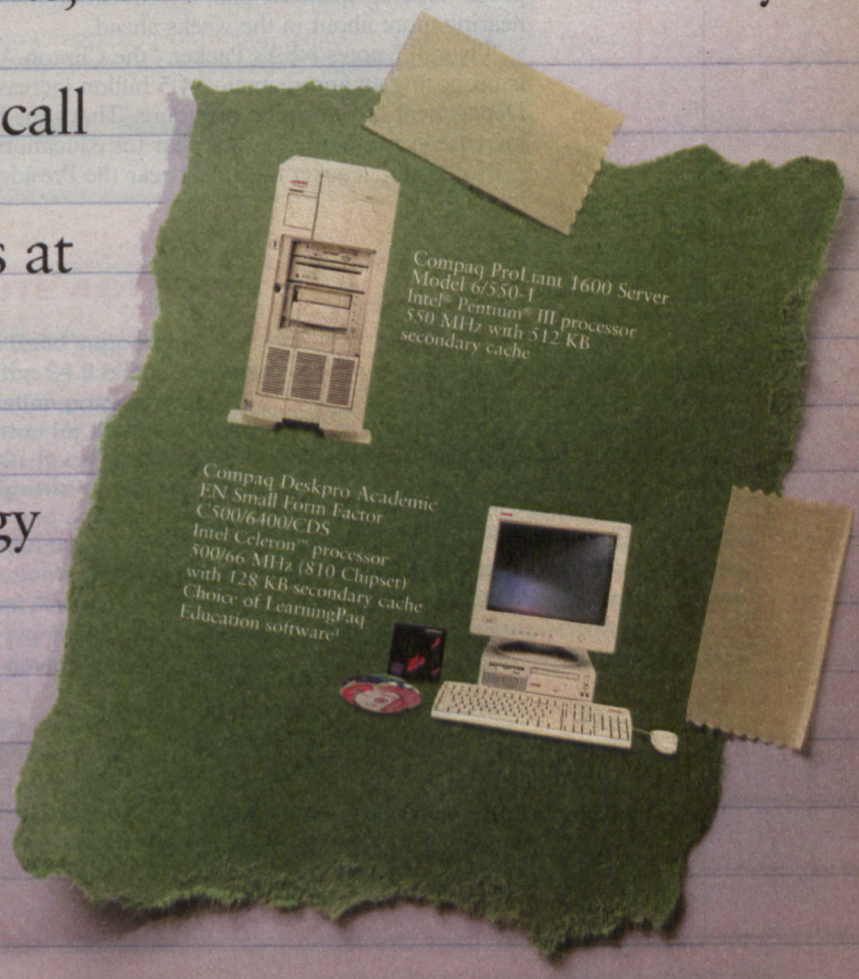
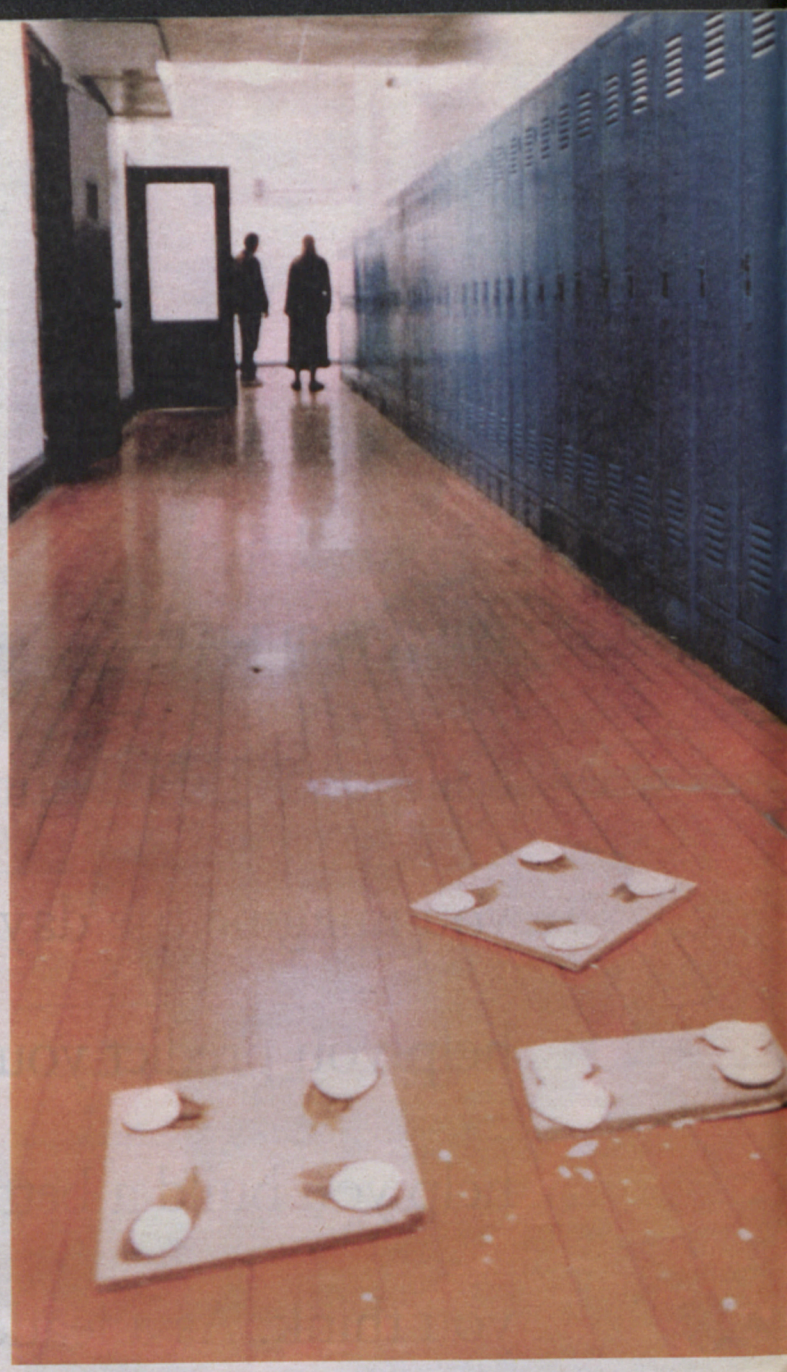


In Congress: An Opportunity To Help Kids

President Clinton's new budget proposes the largest one-year increase in aid to education ever.



A frequent visitor to America's public schools—and we're not talking about the guy who fixes your copier—doesn't like what he's been seeing. "I've been to schools not only with leaky roofs," President Bill Clinton recently told reporters, "but with window frames so old that if you try to power-wash the windows the glass would pop out—and with electrical service so inadequate that if you plug a new computer into the wall, the circuit breaker cuts out."

Fortunately, when you're the nation's chief executive, you can *do* something about matters like this—by proposing a budget that asks Congress to face up to the needs of America's public schools. And that's just what the President, in his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2001, has done.

The final budget proposal of the Clinton White House, if adopted by Congress, would help fix leaky school roofs—and a lot more besides.

The White House budget, notes NEA lobbyist Joel Packer, includes a $450 million increase for the administration's class size reduction program.

This boost would help school districts hire 100,000 new teachers over seven years, enough new hires to reduce class size in grades 1-3 to a nationwide average of 18.

Another initiative in the Clinton budget proposal would add $1 billion for "teacher quality" efforts, including everything from a recruitment program for new teachers in high-poverty districts to expansion of the $335 million Eisenhower Professional Development Program.

Pretty progressive stuff, but it's just the beginning of a proposed national spending plan for education that you'll be hearing more about in the weeks ahead.

"Overall," notes NEA's Packer, "the Clinton Administration is proposing an approximate $4.5 billion increase in Department of Education programs. That's the largest increase *ever* provided in one year for education initiatives."

By contrast, Packer adds, last year the President only proposed a $1.2 billion increase.

The scope of the White House's budget proposal for education is as ambitious as the pricetag.

The President, for instance, is asking Congress to create new initiatives like a mentoring program for middle school students, counseling support for elementary students, and a $120 million initiative to create smaller, safer, and better high schools—through competitive grants to districts for innovations like schools-within-schools, career academies, and more personal student attention and academic support.

Among other groundbreaking initiatives in the Clinton budget: a $30 million program to provide professional development opportunities for early childhood educators who serve high concentrations of children living in poverty.

Facts & Figures

Why schools need modernizing:

- One third of all U.S. public schools need extensive repair.
- The average public school is 42 years old. Schools begin rapid deterioration after 40 years.
- A record 52.7 million children are enrolled in elementary schools today, a number that will climb to 54.3 million by 2008.

Sources: General Accounting Office and U.S. Education Department

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Approximately 70 percent of American high school students attend schools enrolling 1,000 or more students, despite the strong body of research documenting the benefits of smaller high schools. These benefits include fewer disciplinary problems, less alcohol use, and greater achievement.

"The significant benefits of smaller schools justify a federal investment to encourage school districts to undertake research-based strategies to create smaller learning communities."

—From a Congressional Conference Report, November 17, 1999

The Administration's proposed budget calls for added funding—in this boom economy—for a variety of existing education programs. Included:

- A $1 billion boost for Head Start.
- A doubling of funding, from $453 million this fiscal year to $1 billion in FY 2001, for after-school and summer school programs.
- A doubling of funding for teacher technology training, from $75 million to $150 million.
- A $100 million increase for safe/healthy school initiatives.
- Increases in college student aid, including a $200 boost in individual Pell Grants for disadvantaged students and a $10,000 tuition tax deduction.

The President is also advancing two school modernization initiatives, starting with $1.3 billion a year over the next five years in federal grants and interest-free loans for urgent renovation projects in high-needs districts.

A related initiative, already introduced in the form of House and Senate bills, would create a "tax credit bond" for school modernization and construction.

None of this, of course, will happen unless Congress goes along. As the budget process unfolds, moving toward an October 1 deadline, NEA will be pushing for "at least the funding levels the President is proposing," says lobbyist Packer, "and possibly for more—for programs like special aid, impact aid, and vocational education."

NEA leaders and lobbyists "have already had lots of high-level meetings with the Administration to urge budget increases in priority areas," he adds, "and we'll keep talking to lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to get the support kids and schools need. But we can't succeed without the help of our best lobbyists of all: NEA members." ✔

President Clinton has personally witnessed school conditions like these. He'll need *your* help to fix them.

What You Can Do

For updated background on the upcoming federal budget battle over education, check the Web for the NEA Legislative Action Center at www.nea.org/lac/funding.

Heroes & Zeroes

▲ Successful businessman that he is, University of Connecticut alum Ray Neag knows about investments and returns. So it might not surprise any school employee that Neag made a huge gift, $21 million, to UConn's School of Education—the largest donation ever to a U.S. teacher training institution. "I thought carefully about leveraging my assets for the greatest public benefit," says Neag, cofounder of a firm that makes medical devices. "Education made a big difference in my life—if we're going to make an impact, it's got to start at a very, very early age. Some people say that if you get to a child in his formative years, he's yours forever."

Peter Morenus

▼ Speaking of getting to kids in their formative years: Publisher McGraw-Hill has released a textbook, now approved for use in 41 states, that uses commercial brand names and logos to teach the principles of sixth-grade math. One exercise even asks students to figure out how much money they need to buy a pair of Nike shoes. "This is the first time we've seen advertising in state-subsidized textbooks," notes Andrew Hagelshaw of the nonprofit Center for Commercial-Free Public Education. "A math textbook should not be another opportunity for companies to make kids brand-loyal to their products." For more on commercializing textbooks, go to www.commercialfree.org.

▲ It's always nice to find a politician more driven by principles than polling data. Sue Connor, president of the Northwest Arctic Education Association in Alaska, cites Kotzebue Mayor Chuck Greene for his intervention last year in a school district contract dispute. "When the school board and our bargaining team were at a standstill and a strike was imminent," recalls Connor, "Mayor Greene encouraged the board to go back to the table and further the negotiations."

Thanks to Greene's involvement, Connor's local was able to avoid a strike and settle with a reasonable contract.

"Mayor Greene," Connor concludes, "is our local hero."

15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

■ **The Goal:** Build support in Congress for the $4.5 billion increase in aid to education proposed by President Clinton for the federal government's 2001 fiscal year budget.

■ **Your Assignment:** Contact your representative and senators and let them know about the needs of your school and students. Help them understand that America's public schools need significant support from every level of government, federal included.

■ **Here's how to get started:** Ready to become a cyber-lobbyist for America's kids and schools? You can find all you need to make your voice heard online at www.nea.org.lac. ✔

Send Us Stories...

...and photos, too. Are you working in a school with serious problems, like a leaky roof or packed classrooms? Send stories and photos to myschool@list.nea.org or mail them to My School, NEA, Room 510, Washington, DC 20036. We'll post stories and photos at www.nea.org/lac/modern.

An 'A-Plus' Plan Gets an 'F'

Florida NEA members challenge Governor Jeb Bush's plan to improve education: vouchers and school grading.

It isn't smart politics to talk about "raising teacher standards," ending social promotion, and grading public schools based on student achievement if you won't spend enough money or ask teachers how to make it happen.

But that is exactly what Florida Governor Jeb Bush is doing to educators through his complex and hastily conceived "A-Plus for Education Plan," a program that's supposed to improve "accountability for student learning"—on a state education budget that, in real dollars, pays out $200 less per pupil than in 1987.

Robin Donina Serne

Governor Bush orders elementary teacher Kip Mitchell to end social promotions, but won't spend money creating more classroom space. That means a tight squeeze for Mitchell's students.

Bush pushed his program through the state legislature last spring with subtle threats, pork-barrel promises, and a hot gimmick: vouchers. Students in struggling schools graded "F" by state authorities for two years in a four-year period—on the basis of student test scores and other factors—can get vouchers of up to $4,000 for private or religious school tuition.

By now, you've probably heard about these so-called "opportunity scholarships," the first statewide voucher program in the nation. But you probably haven't heard about the damage the Bush A-Plus plan is inflicting on public education—through unfair labeling of schools, unfunded mandates, and unraveling teacher morale.

Kip Mitchell, who teaches third grade at the Baypoint Elementary Magnet School in St. Petersburg, has seen these problems and more.

In her district, Pinellas County, parents worry over how the A-Plus plan is "branding" their kids' schools, while teachers feel pressured to produce in overcrowded classrooms.

"All Pinellas students now must take algebra classes to graduate," Mitchell points out, "and some of those classes have more than 30 kids. And some of our elementary school classes exceed 30 students—they need more *room*. At Bayport Elementary, we have 13 portable classrooms. I taught in one for two years."

Mitchell chairs the government relations committees of both her NEA local and state affiliates.

"The A-Plus plan is demoralizing everyone," she says. "You only get bonuses from the state and positive feedback if you happen to be in an 'A' school—it's pitting teacher against teacher."

"The unintended consequence of the A-Plus plan is that teachers in the so-called worst schools are getting fed up and leaving," adds David Clark, a staffer for the Florida Teaching Profession-NEA.

YOUR DUES DID IT

NEA Voucher Suits Bear Fruit

■ In Ohio, U.S. District Court Judge Solomon Oliver Jr. has ruled that Cleveland's private school voucher program violates the constitutional separation of church and state because it directs tax dollars to religious schools—the vast majority of institutions participating in the scheme. "A program that is so skewed toward religion," the judge wrote, "necessarily results in indoctrination attributable to the government and provides financial incentives to attend religious schools."

"Judge Oliver has issued a comprehensive and well-reasoned decision that should have persuasive impact with other courts that consider the issue," says NEA General Counsel Bob Chanin, lead attorney in the Cleveland case. "This is, moreover, the latest in an unbroken string of federal court decisions holding that voucher programs of this type violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment."

■ In a lawsuit brought by NEA, the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania has struck down a voucher program adopted in 1998 by the Southeast Delco school district. The appellate court said this scheme violated state law. ✔

THE BOTTOM LINE

INEQUALITY: The average real income of high-income families grew 15 percent in the 1990s, while middle-income families saw their incomes rise just 2 percent, not enough to make up for income declines in the 1980s. For more: www.epinet.org.

PROFESSIONS: Nurses have replaced pharmacists as the professionals considered to have the highest ethical standards. Teachers place fifth of the 45 professions rated, after vets and physicians. For more: www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr991116.asp.

LOW STANDARDS: Thirty-six of the 39 states that require prospective educators to pass a basic-skills test let individuals who fail these exams teach, says a major new *Education Week* study. For more: www.edweek.org/sreports/qc00/.

PAY: Teachers in their 20s earn $8,000 less per year than other college grads the same age. Teachers near 50 earn $23,655 less than other professionals their age. For more: www.edweek.org/sreports/qc00/templates/chart.cfm?slug=recruit-c2.htm.

Ever so slowly, Mitchell observes, lawmakers who thought they knew how to improve "low-performing schools" are coming to realize how strongly socioeconomic factors impact student achievement. In Pinellas County, she notes wryly, "we educators predicted, even before Governor Bush put the A-Plus Plan in place, exactly which schools would rank 'D' and 'F'!"

If Governor Bush and legislators really *listened* to educators, parents, and students about what it takes to boost achievement, they'd hear a long list of unmet needs, everything from more funding for supplies and facilities to better professional development and better salaries to retain good teachers.

NEA members in Florida have come to see that it's time to speak louder. Last year, FTP-NEA's 62,000 members voted to pay an extra $15 in dues a year to work a "Listen to Us" message into every Association activity, from lobbying to Read Across America.

To build this campaign, FTP-NEA has created a grassroots Center to Restore Public Confidence in Public Education. At its core: a "Center team" in each local, trained to carry the "Listen to Us" theme to the broader public and mobilize Association members right up to the November election—when 50 percent of state legislative seats will be up for grabs.

"We've formed our own Center team in Pinellas County," reports Kip Mitchell, "and we've used faculty reps to hold 10-minute site meetings to educate members on the pitfalls of the A-Plus plan—which we want to reform through legislation. We've used these meetings to collect member data cards, and we plan to show people how they can be involved, like sending E-mails to legislators and letters to editors."

FTP-NEA is also:

- Producing a "Proud Graduate" media campaign to promote the quality work of Florida public schools.
- Keeping up the legal heat on Governor Bush, through a lawsuit charging that his voucher plan violates both the U.S. and Florida constitutions.
- Working through both parties to oppose vouchers. "Two Republican state House members from Pinellas County, Gus Billirakis and John Morroni, took enormous heat from the governor in the last session," reports Mitchell. "They were threatened, stood their ground, and voted against vouchers. We need more allies like them."
- Exposing vouchers for what they are: a shift of public funds to Florida's totally deregulated private schools.

Consider the irony: While Governor Jeb Bush is crusading for public school "accountability," he's unwilling to require that voucher schools be accredited, hire certified teachers, be fiscally sound, or have a history of achievement. "All a private school needs to receive a Florida voucher," points out FTP-NEA's David Clark, "is a building, a name, and proof that it has been in existence for a year. Period." ✔

"We heard about vouchers before up North, but never thought they would pass here. Don't assume it won't happen in your state—be alert and know the issues."

—Florida elementary teacher Kip Mitchell

For more information on FTP-NEA's campaign, go to www.ftp.nea.org.

BACK TALK

When they say: "Vouchers have absolutely no effect on public school revenues."
You can say: "The availability of educational opportunity will diminish as dollars leave buildings with voucher students," says David Clark, a staffer for the Florida Teaching Profession-NEA. "How can you run a restaurant with 50 items on the menu for just six customers? You'll just be left offering a cheese sandwich."

"Because of vouchers, you will lose teacher units, parent involvement, and dollars for the arts, music, and other specialty programs," adds FTP-NEA President Maureen Dinnen. "*All* students deserve a complete, quality educational experience." ✔

Report Card

NAME	GRADE	COMMENTS
Brockton (Massachusetts) Housing Project	A	Fantastic neighbors. This coalition of lenders and city officials worked with Brockton Education Association President Joseph O'Sullivan to create the Teacher Next Door Program, which provides $8 million in discounted loans for teachers to buy homes in Brockton.
Racine (Wisconsin) Unified School District	D	Intensive supervision needed. RUSD relies heavily on consultants—a key step towards privatization. One hired gun gets $65,000, plus $11,000 in expenses, to "study" district facilities, even though the school board already did such a study in its strategic plan.
SBASHK, the Kosovo education union	A+	An inspiration. Since 1991, SBASHK has worked to ensure, by peaceful, nonviolent means, that each Kosovar Albanian child and young person receives education in his or her own language, incorporating his or her community's culture and curriculum perspectives.
CTERA, the Argentine education union	Class honors	More inspiration! CTERA members have won a national law—with a government guarantee—providing $660 million for teachers' salaries. Their weapons: 1,003 days of fasting by 1,400 teacher participants under a "White Tent" and solidarity from education unions overseas.

MINORITIES: Some 12 percent of America's students are Hispanic, but only 4 percent of teachers. About 16 percent of students are Black, only 7 percent of teachers. For more: www.edweek.org/sreports/qc00/templates/article.cfm?slug=minority.htm.

CURRICULUM: Tests in two Florida public school districts have asked: "Why is it hard for a non-Christian to understand things about God?" For more from the new report, *The Good Book Taught Wrong*: www.pfaw.org/news/press//show.cgi?article=947782158.

ALCOHOLISM: Nearly a quarter of America's kids live in homes where adults have serious problems with drinking. For more from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: http://silk.nih.gov/silk/niaaa1/releases/4children.htm.

MORE ALCOHOLISM: Deaths related to alcoholism outnumber deaths related to illicit drugs by four-to-one, and, adds a new study, alcoholism costs society 50 percent more than all illicit drugs combined. For more: www.drugstrategies.org.

Time We Got Paid What We're *Worth*

With NEA help, New York community college ESP win pay upgrades.

In another workplace, New York State NEA member Phoebe Forbes might be called a business manager. Among her other duties in the business office of Jamestown Community College, Forbes certifies more than $2.5 million in student awards for the state tuition assistance program, maintains financial records, and helps collect past due accounts.

Yet Forbes is officially a "senior account clerk typist," a humble civil service job title with an ancient job description quilled before the dawn of office technology. And across the campus, other "typists" are, in reality, high-tech department secretaries, many coordinating the affairs of 30 to 40 faculty members at a time.

Until recently, the pay of JCC's predominantly female support staff pretty much reflected those modest titles—not the skill, effort, and responsibility required to run a large community college with two campuses, two satellite centers, a distance-learning operation, and a child care center.

But that's starting to change, thanks to a pay equity/job classification study conducted by NEA and November pay upgrades for 64 employees—from $200 to $1,600 annually—negotiated by the Jamestown Community College Service Association.

The effort that produced this historic agreement was kicked off in 1993 by Phoebe Forbes after she learned about NEA's pay equity program. Forbes, now vice president of the 122-member JCCSA, then began working with NEA and NEA-New York staff to eliminate gender and racial bias from college pay scales.

The need for that work wasn't a hard concept to grasp.

"When did we start paying cleaning staff the same as or more than secretaries?" asks UniServ Rep Bill Fraser. "In the past, there was a definite prejudice towards paying men more."

NEA job classification specialists started college support staff down the road to pay equity by taking a long, hard look at each position. Almost 80 percent of the JCC staffers completed a 51-question NEA job analysis questionnaire, which was optically scanned and tabulated in Washington, D.C.

"This upgrade shows that if people think something is unfair and just keep plugging, they can do something of quality for NEA members."

—UniServ Rep Bill Fraser

NEA's preliminary "scoring" of JCC jobs on the basis of nine factors—including knowledge and skills, responsibility, complexity, and supervisory responsibility—didn't, like many management-instigated studies, shut out real employee input. Each college support staffer had at least three chances to appeal and adjust his or her job scores, right up to a one-hour individual meeting with an independent classification consultant.

"This was a study *by the people*," stresses JCC computer technician Jeff Camp, who contrasts the NEA analysis with an earlier classification project commissioned by administrators. "Supervisors got to 'edit' me in that

BASICS FOR BEGINNERS

Pay Upgrades Don't Just Happen

An NEA pay equity/job classification project won't succeed in your district or college without buy-in from administrators, a strong NEA local affiliate, and a pot of money set aside to implement pay upgrades—separate from a general pay increase.

"There must be an agreement that nobody loses money in this process," stresses NEA staffer Linda James.

"Pick a pay equity/job classification project as a long-term plan," advises New York UniServ Rep Bill Fraser. "It's hard to come up with adequate money for an immediate fix, and you always need to take into consideration the concerns of administrators."

Local leaders, notes Oregon UniServ Consultant Mike Carter, should prepare for a bit of "internal strife" that results when some members discover they won't get upgrades out of a pay study.

"It may take a little longer to do this right," adds NEA-New York affiliate relations director Lenny Lavalette, "but the results are worth the work." ✔

THE BOTTOM LINE

POLITICAL CANDIDATES: Who's for kids in the 2000 elections and who's just kidding? The Coalition for America's Children is circulating a 10-point platform designed to hold office-seekers accountable. For more: http://www.usakids.org.

CITIZENSHIP: More than half the kids in the United States, notes the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, now live in homes where no parent votes. Only 36 percent of adults voted in 1998. For more: www.gspm.org/csae/.

PESTICIDES: Despite Environmental Protection Agency concerns about the impact of pesticides on kids, only a few states are encouraging alternatives to the use of toxic pesticides in schools. For more: www.epa.gov/reg5foia/pest/matilla/ipm.html.

STATE BUDGETS: Except for Louisiana, every state in the nation is now expecting fiscal year revenues at least as high as expected, says the National Conference of State Legislatures. For more: www.ncsl.org/programs/press/pr991230.htm.

Ray Liuzzo

It takes labor-management cooperation to make pay equity a reality. Flanked by Jamestown Community College administration negotiators Bill Lawhon, far left, and Don Lynn, far right, are Association bargaining team members Charlie Silleman, Robin Giles, Phoebe Forbes, and Jeff Camp.

study," he recalls. "Part of my job was red-penciled right out."

Eventually, college administrators came to appreciate the rigor of NEA's methods, which Bill Fraser calls "professional as hell, with Manhattan phone book-sized documentation."

In negotiations last winter, the parties jointly put up $40,000 in funding for pay upgrades, separate from money for a general pay increase—to which the administration added another $16,000 to smooth out administrative ripples.

The final result: 16 titles, including most child care slots, were upgraded, five remained approximately the same, and seven titles moved downward.

But not one current employee lost a penny.

"We always go into a pay equity/job classification study with the position that nobody loses money in this process," says Linda James, the NEA staffer who led the study at JCC.

Phoebe Forbes, the woman who started it all back in 1993, is pleased by the progress.

"I feel validated that we're finally getting equity here," she says. "It was a long struggle, but the benefits are worth the effort."

"The next challenge," adds Jeff Camp, who chairs the JCCSA Pay Equity Committee, "is to *keep* our compensation system equitable in future bargaining."

The Jamestown Community College upgrades aren't the only good news on the pay equity/job classification front. Among other Association pay equity victories across the nation:

- The first big triumph came back in 1987 when an NEA pay equity study and Association bargaining produced $2.3 million in legislated upgrades for more than 1,000 clerical employees at the University of Maine.
- In Oregon's Salem-Keizer school district, ESP last year negotiated upgrades for 19 job titles. The biggest benefactors: all of the district's 160 bus drivers and many custodians as well.

"We had excellent cooperation with the district," notes UniServ consultant Mike Carter. "More than 1,100 of our 1,600 ESP members completed the NEA job analysis questionnaire. We were able to use members on release time to both help co-workers fill out the questionnaire and conduct meetings where employees could question the initial survey results."

Better yet, the administration and the Salem-Keizer Association of Classified Employees negotiated a joint committee to conduct all future job classifications and reclassifications.

"We hope that our members will develop real confidence in this joint panel," says Carter.

- NEA and its Alaska affiliate are now training an ESP cadre to conduct classification surveys and meetings across the state. ✔

For more info on NEA's pay equity/job classification program, contact NEA staffer Linda James at Ljames@nea.org.

Do'ers Profile

MEA

PAM LILLIE

■ ***Name and profession:*** Pam Lillie, elementary Spanish and "Movement in Spanish" teacher.

■ ***NEA local affiliate:*** Michigan Education Association Local 1.

■ ***Latest accomplishment:*** As chair of Local 1's political action committee for the Armada district, this second-year teacher has been a quick study. She's persuaded all past donors to the voluntary PAC fund to renew their contribution and gotten "all but one" of the new teachers to kick in as well.

Lillie's next goal: to involve more members in political fundraisers, motivate more middle and high school teachers to become politically active, and inform educators exactly where their PAC dollars go—mostly to back local school board candidates who "support our ideals."

Aware of barriers faced by new educators, including too little funding for supplies and too little backing from senior teachers, Lillie is helping her UniServ director create a local-wide committee for non-tenured teachers like herself.

"We need a support group, something that will help us to bounce ideas around," she says. "We'd like one non-tenured rep from each district in our local to report back to the committee on concerns."

■ ***Words of wisdom:*** "If you're a new teacher, become involved in the Association any way you can. Have a say, a little input, instead of sitting back and having no control.

"Volunteer for a fundraiser, take a step forward, learn something new about your district. You'll meet many new people and make new friendships. Finally, go with your heart and ignore the negative comments. You're not there for the people who make those comments, but for the children."

(Pam Lillie can be reached at PLil12973@aol.com)

KUDOS TO. . .

A Bit of ESP History in Nebraska

■ NEA's first ESP affiliate in Nebraska, the 15-member **Waverly Transportation Association,** has negotiated its first contract. The agreement places transportation employees, who had been "frozen on step" for three years, on the proper step of the district rate schedule according to years of service.

■ Federal Education Association activist **Mike Barrett,** a teacher at A.T. Mahan High School in Keflavilik, Iceland, has helped win a 15 percent increase in his military post's allowance for civilian employees. Barrett got 32 teacher colleagues to complete a spending habits survey and collaborated with Air Force Major Chris Lozo, who created software to tabulate findings and prepare a presentation for the brass. The result: a post allowance increase for all on- and off-base civilians and a pledge from the local military command to include civilians in all future COLA surveys.

■ **NEA faculty and support staff affiliates at Iowa's Southeastern Community College** have convinced the board of trustees—for now—not to privatize maintenance and groundskeeping functions and slash 16 jobs. Students staged a walkout over the issue, staffers staged a rally and informational picket, and 300 employees, students, and community residents packed a board meeting. Trustees put the privatization plan on hold and formed a stakeholders' panel to examine ways to cut costs without cutting people. ✔

GRADUATION RATES: The Center on Education Policy is reporting that the nation's dropout rate dropped by 4 percent between 1972 and 1997. The rate for black teens is down 8 percent. For more: www.aypf.org/publicatons/Good_News.pdf.

SAT SCORES: Between 1983, the year *A Nation At Risk* was released, and 1999, math SAT scores jumped 17 points. Some 14 percent more students went to college in 1997 than in 1983. For more: http://policy.com/news/dbrief/dbriefarc470.asp.

NATIONAL GOALS: Over the course of the 1990s, North Carolina substantially boosted the percentage of public school fourth graders in the state proficient in math. For more on how your state did over the last 10 years: www.negp.gov/99facts.htm.

ECONOMY: The number of billionaires in the United States is up 306 percent since 1989. The number of Americans without health insurance is up 33 percent. For more on the 1990s: www.stw.org/my_html/Divided.html.

RIGHTS WATCH

Testing High Stakes Testing

Texas court OK's 'discriminatory' graduation exam.

In a landmark decision, a federal court in Texas has given the green light to a state requirement that high school students pass an academic skills test in order to graduate.

Despite finding that the exam had a "significant adverse impact" on Hispanic and African American students, the court upheld the test because it "serves the legitimate educational goals" of the state.

Since roughly half the states now have some form of graduation exam, the court's January ruling could have national implications.

Implemented in 1990, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test requires students to demonstrate competence in three areas: reading, math, and writing.

In a lawsuit filed in 1997, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) argued that the TAAS test is illegal because of the high failure rate among minorities. The initial failure rate was 67 percent for African Americans and 59 percent for Hispanics, but only 31 percent for white students.

According to MALDEF attorney Albert Kauffman, between 8,000 and 9,000 Texas high school seniors don't graduate each year because they can't pass the exam, and 87 percent of those are minorities.

Texas students are tested every year, starting in third grade. High school students must pass an exam to graduate. They can retake the test eight times.

Federal judge Edward C. Prado ruled that the testing requirement is not unlawful, for several reasons.

First, the test had been adequately validated, both as to "content validity" and "curricular validity." Students, the judge said, are tested on what is taught.

More important, students who fail the test on the first try are entitled to remediation services. Some 44,500 minority students were "successfully remediated" in 1997, according to the court. Kauffman estimates that between 60 percent and 70 percent of students who initially fail the test eventually pass.

Far from disadvantaging minorities, Judge Prado argued, the test actually helps the state "identify and eradicate educational disparities."

The court recognized that "current prevailing standards for the proper use of educational testing" urge that "high stakes decisions," such as whether to graduate a student, "should not be made on the basis of a single test score." That principle doesn't apply here, the court said, because a student can take the test many times.

Finally, the court found "no credible evidence" for the claim that the TAAS requirement causes large numbers of minority students to drop out of school.

The test does not "perpetuate prior educational discrimination," the court concluded. Rather, test results are used to motivate students, schools, and teachers and "to raise and meet educational standards."

It is not for him, Judge Prado said, "to rule on the wisdom of standardized examinations," but only whether the testing program is lawful. The TAAS test may have had an adverse impact on minorities, he added, but that likely resulted from other factors such as: socioeconomics, family support, funding, the quality of teaching and educational materials, and individual effort.

Critics of high stakes testing lambasted the court's decision. Monty Neill of FairTest charged that the ruling means "racially biased tests are acceptable because instilling fear and using high-stakes tests are necessary for educational reform."

According to MALDEF's Kauffman, most Texas teachers oppose TAAS testing because "teachers can't teach anymore." Instead of covering the subject matter, they have to "teach to the test" and drill students on test-taking skills.

Kauffman told *NEA Today* he hasn't heard of any teacher being fired for poor student performance on the TAAS test. "But that's coming," he warns.

A copy of the decision in *G. I. Forum v. Texas Education Agency* is available on the web at www.txwd.uscourts.gov. ✔

– Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Punishing Teachers for Low Student Scores

Civil rights attorney Albert Kauffman (see main story) predicts it's just a matter of time before school districts start firing teachers for poor student performance on standardized tests. Can they do that?

To date, only one school district has tried, and a federal court quickly stepped in.

In 1985, the St. Louis (Missouri) Board of Education adopted a policy requiring an "unsatisfactory" rating for any English, math, or communications teacher whose students performed poorly on the relevant portions of the California Achievement Test (CAT). A teacher who received an unsatisfactory rating could be put on probation and ultimately discharged for incompetency or inefficiency.

The St. Louis Teachers Union immediately filed a class action lawsuit challenging the policy, arguing that it was "arbitrary and capricious" and violated the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment.

The union charged that the CAT "was not designed for use as, and has not been validated for use as, a teacher evaluation tool," and, for that reason, the exam is an "unreliable indicator of how much teacher performance affected student performance."

After a federal court refused to dismiss the lawsuit and ruled that the union had a valid claim, the board of education rescinded the policy.

In a case with a somewhat different twist, the North Carolina Association of Educators in May 1998 filed a court challenge to a new state law requiring all teachers in "low-performing" schools (schools where students fared poorly on state tests) to take a competency exam. The state legislature repealed the requirement just days before the first teacher test was to be administered.

THE BOTTOM LINE

HOMELESS: In 1999, the demand for emergency food assistance rose faster than any year since 1992. Families with children now make up 37 percent of the homeless. For more: www.usmayors.org/uscm/news/press_releases/hhrelease.htm.

TEEN MOMS: The number of babies born to girls 17 and under dropped again in 1998, the latest year with stats. The 1998 total, 173,252, is 10,000 under the 1990 total and 25,000 less than the 1980 figure. For more: ww.childtrends.org/factlink.cfm.

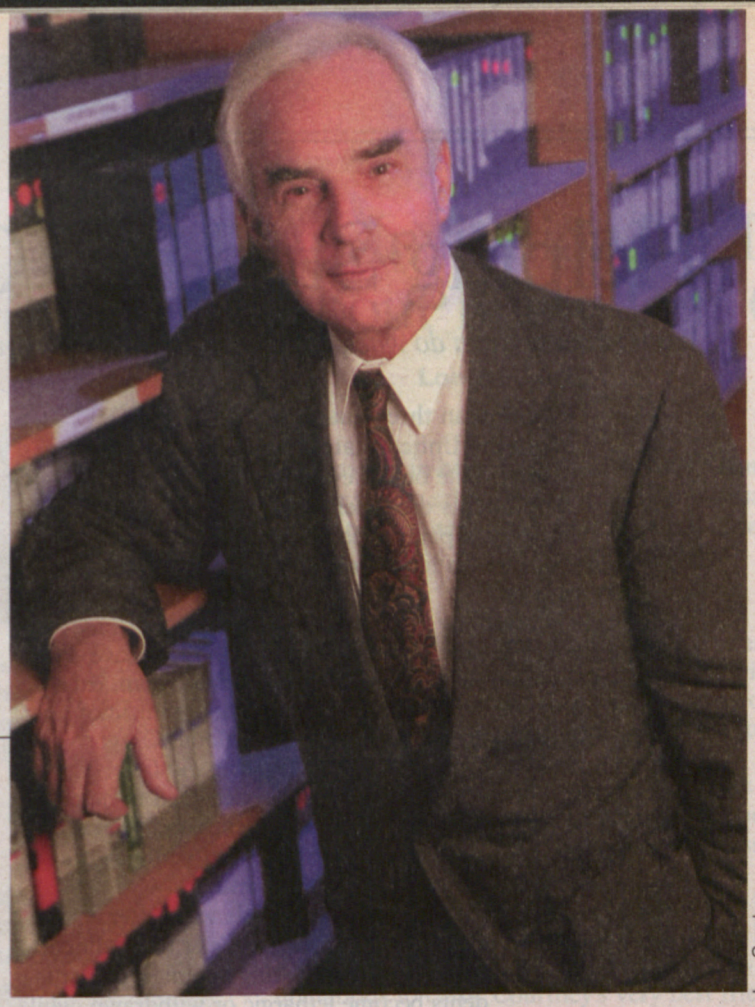
AIDS: Some 250,000 young people worldwide become infected with HIV every month, says the new UNICEF *State of the World's Children 2000* report. The latest AIDS hotspot in the world: South Asia. For more: www.unicef.org/sowc00/.

TAXES: Middle-income families with kids would receive 1.5 percent of the total annual tax cut proposed by Presidential candidate George W. Bush. The most affluent tenth of taxpayers would receive 62 percent of the tax reduction. For more: www.ctj.org.

INTERVIEW

John Merrow On the Education Beat

This veteran journalist and former teacher talks about what it takes to get quality media coverage on today's critical education issues.



Leo Sorel

For 25 years, reporter John Merrow has covered every education issue from accountability to vouchers. A former correspondent for "The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," Merrow has also taught at the high school and college level—and in a federal prison. The creator of the PBS series "Your Children, Our Children," he now hosts "The Merrow Report," a documentary series on youth and learning broadcast on PBS, National Public Radio, and even the Internet. Merrow recently spoke with *NEA Today's* Anita Merina.

Q: How has education reporting changed since you first entered journalism?
Education reporting is much better now. There are more reporters and more dedication to the beat. It's no longer seen as the stepping stone to "better" reporting assignments. With so many things going on, education has become an exciting beat.

Reporting has gotten better because of the Internet—we're all connected. It's so much easier to post a query about who to talk to about urban schools or where to find educators working on a particular topic. I recently asked for schools to feature in one of my series and got 10 responses right away.

Q: With so many stories on standards, vouchers, and charter schools, are reporters on the right track?
Often, yes. But education reporters are no different than political or news reporters. There's a pack mentality, and we probably distort or go overboard sometimes and miss stories. I could list a number of stories that haven't been done well.

Q: Such as?
We're not reporting standards very well. There is this narrow push for standards, translating into higher scores. But I think we're sacrificing kids and teachers on the altar of accountability when you have a curriculum that says, on this date, you must be on page 8. We get into these rigid prescriptive behaviors in part because we don't agree or know how to measure the outcomes.

I've not seen a thorough analysis of the time and money spent on testing. We'll report on the test scores, but rarely on the conditions of the test. Are the results there because it's just a new test no one's used to? There's a certain tension around that.

Q: What about the criticism that "good news" stories aren't being reported?
I disagree with that perception and often feel that those who say that have thin skin. I think 80 percent of the reporting is good story reporting.

But reporters get fed up, too. Superintendents and district public relations people send us a story about a great program, and we find it's only six weeks old. They want the fluff and want it yesterday. Part of it comes from that stock market mentality, the demand for instant results to boost a school's image.

On the other hand, reporters need to spend more time in schools and classrooms. If I were a teacher or superintendent, I'd ask the reporter to come in and spend a day or more at the school—see how it works, get to know the staff and students, and see what really happens. That's how a reporter finds the good stories. Invite reporters in, and perhaps the general public will finally see through their eyes.

Q: Has teaching made you a better reporter?
I hope I'm more sympathetic to the challenges of teaching. I'm certainly more understanding of how the system often puts barriers in the way. My experiences teaching taught me that the system wants control more than anything else. I can understand that in a prison, but in a school?

Just because I'm a former teacher, doesn't mean I can't learn a few things about today's teachers. The most brutal reminder came a couple of years ago when I did a story on Philadelphia superintendent David Hornbeck. I offered to take over the class of a fifth grade teacher so she could film a segment with Hornbeck. When I did, the students ate me alive. I did all the wrong things.

If reporters or the general public could walk in and do the same thing, they'd know what the teaching life is like.

Q: What are you working on now?
My new series—"In Search for Excellence"—actually has me playing a detective. I'm looking for the characteristics of excellent schools, and each segment will feature a different one.

We'll take an issue—school safety for example—and explore what makes a truly safe school. We'll show a school that's not just physically safe but psychologically safe as well, where kids aren't harassed or taunted and it's psychologically safe to make mistakes. We'll cover the same ground on academics and the physical environment.

We're arguing that "good enough" is the enemy of excellence. Not all "award-winning schools" have what I'd call excellence in all areas.

Another of my great joys is the high school curriculum that I've created with an economist and several teachers. We'd been bemoaning the irrelevance of high school curriculum and came up with three CDs that challenge students to create businesses, perform economic analyses, and create business plans. The CDs have been used at a Baltimore high school to great success.

After 25 years, I still feel I really have the greatest job. I cover a field that's always changing, and I'm always finding more to do. ✔

RESOURCES

- "The Merrow Report" is available on video and audiocassette. Free resource guides for parents, teachers, and policy-makers accompany each program. To order, 212/725-7000.
- You can also access "The Merrow Report" and other Learning Matters productions on the Web. You'll find online transcripts, ordering information, and a calendar of upcoming segments. Go to www.pbs.org/merrow.

Learning

Helping Students Grieve

What educators can do when a student in mourning comes to class.

More than three-quarters of a million children in the United States live with a widowed parent. One out of every 750 high school-age students dies every year. One out of 20 will have a parent die before graduation.

There are, in short, a lot of grieving children coming into America's schools.

"Teachers get training on how to deal with death in the classroom *after* the fact, and many understandably have difficulty knowing how to help," says **Donna Schuurman,** executive director of the Dougy Center, a national organization for grieving children and families based in Portland, Oregon.

Schuurman's center has published *Helping the Grieving Student: A Guide for Teachers,* a manual designed to help children and teens make better sense of death and grieve.

"Everybody grieves," says Schuurman, "but you may not always see an outward expression of mourning."

Many children act in classically acceptable ways after a death. They may work hard to get straight *A*'s or make dinner every night for a grieving parent. Other students become lethargic or withdrawn, while still others act out.

Helping the Grieving Student discusses developmental differences of grieving children, common behaviors to expect, and words and actions to avoid. The manual recommends readings for all ages and classroom activities to help bereaved students and their classmates deal with grief.

"I encourage talking with kids in the classroom before a bereaved student comes back," says Schuurman. "Kids want to know what happened."

Schuurman also observes: "When a grieving child comes back to school, death makes them different. Grieving students don't want to stand out, but they don't want to be ignored either. The best thing teachers can do is to ask the child how to be helpful, to let them know, 'I'm thinking of you and I care.'"

Impact:
More than 110 programs modeled on Donna Schuurman's work at the Dougy Center have been developed in the United States, Canada, Japan, Ireland, and Australia.

For More:
The Dougy Center offers training and publications, including a *National Directory of Children's Grief Services.* E-mail help@dougy.org, call 503/775-5683, or visit the Web at www.dougy.org. ✔

Kraig Scattarella

Trends

A "college for all" movement is sweeping the country, says the Department of Education. But its 1999 report *College for All?* questions whether that's so great.

Why? More than 600,000 students every year leave four-year colleges without graduating.

High school graduates with "modest ability or uncertain motivation" may be well advised to attend a two-year college. They'd realize the same earnings at lower cost and with less debt than if they'd gone to a four-year school and dropped out.

Scott Suchman

Kids Will 'Kick Butts' This April

Innovator: Matt Myers

Job:
President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a group devoted exclusively to reducing tobacco use among children

Bright Idea:
Educators play a critical role in influencing kids to choose a tobacco-free life, says Matt Myers.

That's why the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids has partnered with NEA in Kick Butts Day, a nationwide event that mobilizes young people to help curb tobacco use and expose tobacco marketing tactics.

This year, Kick Butts Day will take place on April 5.

"We truly have a crisis with tobacco use among children," says Myers. In the 1990s, he notes, tobacco companies dropped the price on the cigarette brands children smoked most. The result: Smoking rates among children skyrocketed between 1993 and 1996.

Myers is working with the NEA Health Information Network to develop a model curriculum to help identify how the tobacco industry manipulates young people and to teach students advocacy skills to fight back.

"Everybody in the educational process—from coaches and bus drivers to counselors, teachers, and the people who maintain the buildings themselves—has a vitally important role in reinforcing the positive messages about being smoke free," says Myers. "The goal is delivering a consistent message."

Impact:
Kick Butts Day began in 1996 in only 32 schools. Now, with nearly 1,200 events nationwide, the day has attracted national media attention and mobilizes tens of thousands of kids.

For More:
Call 800/284-KIDS or visit www.tobaccofreekids.org or www.nea.org/neatoday. ✔

Neil Michel

Time for a Longer School Year?

What role does time play in learning and instruction? What are the benefits and drawbacks of extending the nine-month school year? Patricia Gándara, associate professor of education at the University of California, Davis, and editor of The Dimensions of Time and the Challenge of School Reform *(newly released by SUNY Press), talks about what's being tried, what's working, and the surprising implications for teachers.*

What do educators need to understand about time and its relationship to learning?

Educators understand quite well that time is a very important variable—some children need more time for some things than others. The problem is trying to make that understanding work in a rigid school system that doesn't allow teachers to make accommodations for kids.

Several of your book's contributors advocate extending the school year. Why?

We're not arguing that everybody should be in school for more than nine months or that all calendars should look alike. But to innovate and maximize your resources, it makes sense to rethink the calendar. Some children can go to school for 180 days, but perhaps a different set of 180 days. Other children might be able to attend for more than 180 days where their needs are greater in certain areas.

How does extended time increase teacher satisfaction?

The success of school reform should be judged on outcomes not just for children, but for teachers as well. A calendar that allows teachers to innovate more and work more with children who have particular needs lets teachers see a greater impact on their students. It also can give teachers more flexibility in how they do their job.

In one situation in California, teachers extended their time teaching by 20 percent in exchange for 20 percent more salary. They were restored not only by the increased financial benefits, but also by the opportunity to do things differently.

An open calendar gave these teachers new ways to organize their teaching and more opportunities for collaboration and team teaching. Older, more experienced teachers were innovating in ways they never would have, and many found flexible schedules worked better in their personal lives.

For More:

Contact Gándara at pcgandara@ucdavis.edu. And to find out how teachers—and students—have reacted to a longer school year, visit the Web at www.nea.org/neatoday. ✔

NEA Innovators

Looking for new and creative ways to use the technology in your classroom?

Try the Etools, a weekly E-mail feature on the NEA Web site.

The Etools are practical, ready-to-use ideas submitted by educators, explains Sheila Adjahoe, part of the NEA staff technology team.

Included regularly in the Etools weekly are innovative ideas on how to use the Internet, software, videotapes, and other technology to deliver a lesson.

"NEA's success with other listserv features inspired us to provide an opportunity for classroom practitioners to share their technology tips," says Adjahoe.

To subscribe to Etools, go to www.nea.org/cet/wired.html and click on subscribe. Type in your E-mail address. You'll be added to the E-mail list and get a weekly tip.

An Invitation To Talk About Being Left Out

Innovator: Loretta Long

Job:

Best known in her role as "Susan" on "Sesame Street," also a former public school teacher, college professor, educational consultant, motivational speaker—and, now, children's book author

Bright Idea:

In the make-believe world of "Sesame Street," a blue Cookie Monster easily shares his chocolate chips with Big Bird, who is yellow. But in today's multicultural classrooms, how can educators help young students counteract tough stereotypes and embrace diversity?

Courtney's Birthday Party, Loretta Long's picture book for young readers, tackles the tough issues of prejudice in a heartfelt story that plays out in real-life classrooms all around the country.

Courtney, the book's main character, will be seven on Saturday, and she's planning to invite all of her classmates to a special birthday party. But when Courtney's mom sends the invitations to class, Courtney's very best friend, Diana, who is African American, is not included.

"You should see the look on children's faces when Diana's invitation doesn't come," says Long (pictured here with her "Sesame Street" family). "Kids don't make value judgments on being black or brown or white until someone hurts their feelings."

Children's Television Network

Long conducts diversity workshops throughout the country for parents and educators, often using *Courtney's Birthday Party* as a springboard to discussion with adults.

"I thought I was writing a book about black and white relationships," says Long. "But people tell me that what's at the core of the story is being left out. And that's a universal experience dealing with inclusion."

Courtney's Birthday Party provides an interesting wedge for children and adults to discuss the feelings we all have, says Long. Its vivid watercolor pages and engaging text prompt call and response, singing, counting exercises, and lots of discussion.

In the end, Long's book shows how the love between the two best friends can compel adults to examine their own prejudices and fears and take action.

Impact:

Multicultural publisher Just Us Books has developed an interdisciplinary teaching guide for *Courtney's Birthday Party* that includes discussion questions, activities, vocabulary lists, and additional resources for classroom use. The University of Scranton will release a video based on the book as part of its topical Family Values book and tape series.

For More:

- *Courtney's Birthday Party* ($6.95) and the teaching guide ($2) are available from Just Us Books, 356 Glenwood Ave., East Orange, NJ 07017. Or visit the Teacher's Resource Center on the Web at www.justusbooks.com.
- For Loretta Long booking information, contact Andrew Cohen, American Entertainment, 617/731-8521. ✔

The Great Thinking Machine Show

New Jersey educators create a hot new language skills game that has 95 percent of their students scoring in the 93rd percentile for reading.

Exoskeleton. Metalinguistic. Photosynthesis. These are million-dollar words that would make Regis Philbin's TV show contestants balk. But to students at Lucy N. Holman Elementary in Jackson, New Jersey, these difficult words are like money in the bank.

These students owe their verbal virtuosity to "The Great Thinking Machine Show," an innovative approach to language arts learning invented by NEA member Judi McLoughlin, a speech pathologist at Holman Elementary.

The game requires students to use skills ranging from lateral thinking and long-term memory to public speaking and teamwork.

The payoff: In reading series tests, 95 percent of the students who regularly "play" the game pass with average scores in the 93rd percentile.

Inventor McLoughlin was using the game successfully with individual students when her colleague, fourth grade teacher Judy Schavio, first learned about it. Schavio was looking for a way to help her students with auditory processing problems. The game idea clicked with her, and that's when "The Great Thinking Machine Show" took off.

The game, which is tied to New Jersey's core curriculum standard, is designed to introduce 10 to 15 key words each week.

"The students come up with clues to help understand the words," McLoughlin explains.

Photos by Rachelle Omenson

Judy Schavio (above) has kids excited over words like "interrogative," thanks to a game she developed with Judi McLoughlin (right).

Then, on Fridays, the "Password"-like game show begins, with teachers or students as emcees.

The children set up the classroom like a TV studio, and McLoughlin and other resource teachers are judges. Children pair up in teams to compete and must first discuss the clues and ring a bell to answer. Incorrect responses pass to the other team.

"The class uses the key words all week," says Schavio. "They write them in their portfolios, and I distribute the words and clues to take home for practice."

Originally focusing on science literacy, the show now incorporates vocabulary from all curriculum areas— language arts, social studies, math, science, and Spanish. It can even be used for sign language.

At the midyear mark, the key word list includes approximately 150 words, with 250 to 300 key words as a goal by June.

"This is brain-based thinking," says McLoughlin. "It's how children learn, listen, and think. When they take a clue

Idea Exchange

Snacks for Subs

I always leave a couple of quarters for the substitute to have a juice, pop, or snack on me. Some days, they're called very early in the morning and have long drives ahead of them. This is just one way of saying that I appreciate the effort.

Marcia Chambers
Lancaster, Wisconsin

Parents' Tea

Each May, on the Friday before Mother's Day, we hold a Parents' Tea. Parents are invited to hear their children read poems of love that they have written about them, and the parents read the poems they have written about their child.

A carnation is given to each mother and grandmother, and tea and cookies are enjoyed by all.

Now in its 15th year, the tea provides a time for children to hear how deeply their parents feel about them, and for parents to hear how special they are to their children.

Helene Shalotsky
Chatham, New Jersey

Better Bulletin Boards

As a seventh grade world geography teacher, I frequently change my bulletin boards. For years, I used the school's supply of butcher paper. But transporting and mounting this paper was cumbersome. Color choices were limited. And I felt guilty when I discarded the paper.

Then I found a solution: poster board. I bought four sheets in every color and laminated them. The four matching panels overlap to fit different boards throughout the room. I have a full palette of colors and can make a quick change.

I'm still using the sheets I purchased four years ago.

Susan Dalton
White House, Tennessee

Homework Pass

This past holiday season, I gave a homework pass to students' *parents*, for a night when they have to take their children somewhere or just want to spend time with them. Parents have appreciated the thought.

Staci Kasse
Medford, New Jersey

Works4Me
NEA's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? You can pass along your tips to *NEA Today's* more than 2.4 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: ldeas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

they haven't worked with and are able to use it, that's true learning."

"The constant reinforcement makes the words easy to retain," agrees Schavio. "Over Christmas vacation, we didn't play the game or review the words at all. After break, we were curious to see if students retained them, and they did."

"This is brain-based thinking. It's how children learn, listen, and think."

The game show, now in its second year of implementation, is adaptable and can be used cross-curriculum, from preschool to high school, depending upon vocabulary selected.

McLoughlin and Schavio held a mini-workshop explaining the program to other teachers at Holman, and the program now has been adopted for use throughout the school.

The model has garnered a number of awards. NEA's state affiliate, the New Jersey Education Association, has featured the model on its Emmy award-winning cable program, "Classroom Close-Up." Coverage about The Great Thinking Machine Show has also been broadcast to the tri-state area on the local UPN TV station.

Schavio and McLoughlin plan to conduct more workshops to help get the word out.

"As far as we're concerned, this really works," says Schavio. "The Great Thinking Machine Show really motivates children, and it's very easy to incorporate into your classroom.

Adds Schavio: "Keeping the list is the only work involved—that and making time to play the game." ✔

For more information, contact Judi McLoughlin or Judy Schavio at Lucy N. Holman Elementary, 125 Manhattan St., Jackson, NJ 08527, 732/833-4620. On the Web at www.thecore.com/~lhsc/.

[DILEMMA]

How do you keep students from cheating?

To keep my fifth graders from cheating, I have each student design an office on the first day of school. The office is made by stapling two manila folders together at the top and bottom.

Students can then add designs to their office "walls." Designs have included signs such as "Keep Out," "Keep your eye off of my work," "Private," and "No Cheating."

Before tests are passed out, the offices are put up. Most students use them for all assignments and really like the privacy.

Linda Andrews
Fifth grade teacher
Richmond, Virginia

■ When I started teaching English 40 years ago, I soon ran into identical homework neatly copied several times over. So I came up with a solution that allowed the students to make their own decisions on how to deal with the problem.

I marked the paper, gave it a grade, and divided the points equally among the students involved. No moralizing, no lecture.

The result was no arguments, no complaints, and no repeats. Word got around quickly, and the treatment had to be applied only once every couple of years.

Leonard Irwin
Intermediate high school art teacher
Voorhees, New Jersey

■ On the top of a test form, I put "Form A," "Form B," or "Form C." They're actually all the same, but students may be deterred from cheating when they assume that there's more than one version of the test out there. And this saves me from having to make two forms, two keys, and split up papers to check.

Mark McMahon
Seventh grade math teacher
Alexandria, Virginia

■ I teach seventh and eighth grade learning handicapped students, and the topic of cheating has come up frequently.

My students and I discuss that feeling you experience when you study, concentrate, struggle, give your best effort, and then receive your grade—the grade you earned. Then we discuss how you feel when you cheat, when you earn someone else's grade. And I have students who are good role models share how they feel.

These discussions can be powerful and effective, but they're not enough. During tests, I also whisper support and pat shoulders, and use non-verbal facial expressions.

Rich Ruppert
Middle school special education teacher
Crescent City, California

■ I teach high school math, so it's relatively easy to change the numbers in problems and keep the two versions very similar. For essay questions or proofs, I simply change the order.

I also require work to be shown. The answer is worth one or two points, but the work is worth three to four points for each problem.

Karen Daniels
High school math teacher
Elgin, Illinois

■ One of the most effective methods for reducing even the temptation to cheat has been to monitor test time from the back of the room. When students know you're watching from the back, it's harder for them to turn heads, since they don't know where you're looking.

Mark Wyn
Middle school science teacher
Fremont, Michigan

Ted Pitts

Got an Answer?

How do you make life easier for a teacher who's new to the profession?

Send your answer by regular mail, by fax to 202/822-7206, or by E-mail to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level, if applicable.

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For more answers on how to prevent cheating, visit the Web at www.nea.org/neatoday.

Learning

'Real Science' Tackles Pollution

Idaho's Cascade Reservoir—to some, an environmental sore spot. To Clint Kennedy, a great hands-on lab.

High school students—with teacher Clint Kennedy—are eagerly getting their hands dirty developing award-winning ways to save the Cascade Reservoir.

How can teachers encourage students to be problem solvers instead of mere textbook readers? For science teacher Clint Kennedy, the answer was practically in his own back yard.

Born and raised in the pristine Idaho mountains, Kennedy looked forward to teaching at Cascade High School, located near the sparkling waters of the Cascade Reservoir.

But, by the time he realized his teaching dream, the reservoir had turned green. Kennedy's students all had reservoir horror stories about dead fish and cattle, and local headlines cautioned residents about the risks of swimming in reservoir waters.

The community, in other words, saw the reservoir as a health hazard. Kennedy, on the other hand, saw an outdoor laboratory.

"I knew the reservoir presented a wonderful opportunity to teach kids," says Kennedy, who teaches integrated science, advanced biology, applied chemistry, and other subjects in his rural high school of only 135 students.

To seize that opportunity, Kennedy developed the Cascade Reservoir Restoration Project, an advanced biology course that has juniors and seniors design and conduct specific projects to help improve the reservoir.

In the first phase of the course, which runs about four months, students are introduced to basic facts about the reservoir through lectures, visits for hands-on demonstrations, and field trips to agencies like the Department of Environmental Quality.

Class periods are 95 minutes long, and that allows complex labs to run during class time. Field trips are taken for half days, full days, and weekends.

In the second phase, students divide themselves into groups of three or four. They're asked to propose a practical, feasible project.

As part of these projects, students do everything from attend water quality meetings and give public testimony to set up cooperative experiments with experts in the field and use the Internet for research.

"The idea is to allow kids to take neat ideas and try them—to do real science," says Kennedy, who also serves as president of the Cascade Education Association. "They learn why you have to do math, why art's important, why English is important. There's a connection with all these classes."

In the final phase of the class, students present their projects as a 20-page report that includes graphs, drawings, and a bibliography. They also use high-tech equipment and software to prepare a half-hour video.

Since 1991, student projects have produced some remarkable outcomes. Kennedy's students, for instance, successfully convinced ranchers and the Bureau of Reclamation to construct wetlands around the reservoir.

Another student was awarded a $6,500 grant to try a creative approach to save trout. Still another group of students, self-dubbed "The Sewage Sisters," spent almost two years researching and promoting cutting-edge technology developed in England to

How I Did It

E. Renée Heiss
Seventh grade home economics and reading and tenth grade child development teacher
Tabernacle, New Jersey

I developed "Roll-book Renovation," a grading system that gives students a strong incentive to work hard until the end of the semester.

With Roll-book Renovation, all students begin the marking period with 100 percent. With each assignment or test, the student either maintains the 100 percent or loses a corresponding number of points, depending on the grade.

For example, if a quiz is worth five points and Annie earns three, then her grade for the marking period drops from 100 percent to 98. This is still a respectable grade. Annie feels successful and is encouraged to maintain her good grade. With the traditional grading method, she would have received a 60 percent, demoralizing her and setting her up for future failures.

At the middle of the marking period, Annie has lost 15 points, so her average is 85 percent. This is a *B* in most districts, an above-average grade. But with Roll-book Renovation, this is as good as it gets for her.

Unless Annie raises her standards to get better grades than she has demonstrated, her marking period grade will probably go even lower.

Presented with this dilemma, Annie is more likely to comply with my requests to complete projects for the balance of the marking period, since she wants to keep her *B* average.

I offer extra credit projects for students who want to make up points for mistakes earlier in the marking period.

Rachelle Omenson

Once my students become accustomed to my grading system, I usually find them motivated to work until the end of the marking period, constantly striving to perfect their grades. ✔

reduce nutrients in wastewater. The girls received nearly $22,000 in grants from organizations and private citizens.

"My job is to put you into a position of opportunity," Kennedy tells his students. "What you do with the opportunity is up to you."

After two years of hard, grimy work, the project itself didn't generate the end result students sought, but they found other rewards. As one wrote in her project report:

"Working on the Biocoil taught me science, but I learned much more: the joys of working in a small group, the challenges of time management, the evils of procrastination, the tensions of public speaking, the art of the public bicker … we covered it all."

A key to the project's success, says Kennedy, is putting responsibility for education on the kids.

"My job is to put you into a position of opportunity," he tells each new class. "What you do with the opportunity is up to you. You need to know why you're learning."

Kennedy's students have had an article published in *National Geographic.* They've been covered extensively by local media, won scholarships and grants, and been recognized by the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse of Math and Science Education.

"Students can get things done that other people can't," he says. "Respect the power that students have when you give them a chance. Turn them loose, and they can do wonderful things."

Adds Kennedy: "I learned with the students. To me, that's fun. It's what keeps me teaching." ✔

For more information, E-mail Clint Kennedy at ckennedy@uidaho.edu or visit www.cascadehs.csd.k12.id.us/advbio/home.html.

[DILEMMA]

How do you raise morale among teachers and support staff?

We work to improve staff morale by having a Wellness Committee. Each month, the committee puts a piece of fruit in each staff member's mailbox. And we host exercise nights, where the staff and their families can walk, use the weight room, or play games in the gym. Then we conclude with a soup supper.

So far, these seem to help make our staff from four buildings more cohesive.

David Larsen
K-6 music teacher
Hawarden, Iowa

■ Almost half of my faculty is new to the teaching profession. I found the best way to raise morale is to affirm what people are doing. When I see them on target, I let them know. The smile I get in return is worth a million bucks to them and me.

To the rest of the veteran teachers out there—find a newbie and catch 'em doing good.

Cynthia Wilson
Media coordinator
National Board Certified teacher
Roxboro, North Carolina

■ Our staff morale is always high because our district seems to focus on what is good rather than on what is bad. They—and we—don't ignore whatever needs improvement. But the tone is one of "let's make it better" rather than "you messed up—ha ha!"

This attitude can work anywhere, and it really makes me want to come to work every day.

Rob Polley
Elementary school computer teacher
New Canaan, Connecticut

■ Our student council sponsors a staff appreciation day each spring, right before spring break. A staff breakfast is set up, at which each teacher is given a certificate of appreciation and a small gift by the student council members.

The staff really appreciates it, and the students remember to stop for an instant and thank their teachers.

Barbara Walton-Faria
Eighth grade science teacher
Newport, Rhode Island

■ We have a big sheet of butcher paper laminated on our staff lunchroom table. People can write things on there that are important—or things they just want others to know. It's a fun way to communicate with people that you may not see in a day.

Rita Kim Wiebe
Fourth grade teacher
Hastings, Nebraska

Ted Pitts

■ We have a monthly birthday celebration. At the start of each school year, staff members write down their birthday month. And each staff member signs up to help prepare the birthday breakfast for another month.

The party makers make a sign announcing the birthday people for the month and bring in breakfast one morning. Staff members have made pancakes and sausage in the school cafeteria and brought in bagels, doughnuts, and coffee cake.

It's a nice way to start our day!

Susan Fiorentino
Resource teacher
South Bound Brook, New Jersey

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Hotel accommodation rewards are valid at participating properties in the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. There is no minimum stay requirement. Rewards are valid for a standard single- or double-occupancy room with a nightly rate, including tax. Personal, optional and incidental expenses are your responsibility. These are the current requirements for a hotel accommodation reward: for a nightly room rate up to $110: 3,000 *Points* and for a room rate up to $200: 5000 *Points*.

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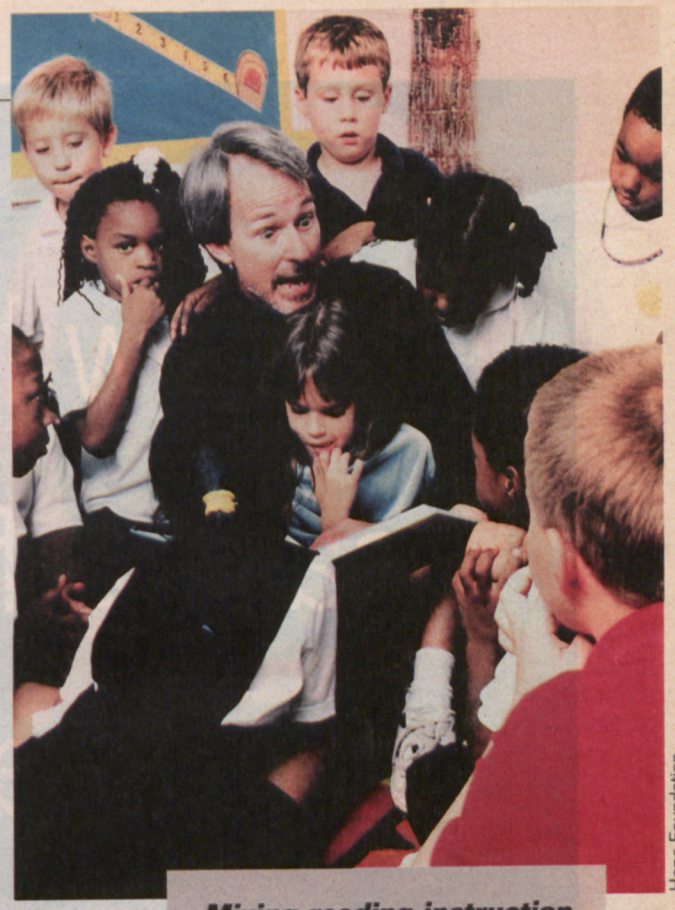
How To Create A Passion For Reading

Tips from two teachers on how to kindle a love for reading with thrills, not drills.



Hope Foundation

Mixing reading instruction that's fun and exciting, with periods of being 'read to,' sets the stage for creating lifelong readers, says teacher Andy Baumgartner.

Adults will often read out loud to youngsters. But that habit can wane as children grow older. As children develop a sight vocabulary and the ability to decode words, it's common for adults to be thrilled that these students can now read silently, read to themselves.

Becoming able to read to oneself is indeed a developmental achievement. But it's being read to that inspires a love of reading. I have seen this in children that I have taught from elementary through high school.

A read-aloud experience, I've learned, is enjoyable for a lifetime.

Try not to get overwhelmed with using each moment of class time to assess and test. It's important to convey a sense of the enjoyment of reading to students.

Reading is not just decoding or memorizing the letters that are linked together by sounds and pronounced as words. Reading is understanding a message. Reading is an experience.

I model for parents how to use their voice and expressions to "get into" the book. They often look embarrassed. Some will ask, "How do you do that without feeling self-conscious?"

I answer that it's more fun for me to read a text that way. I want to make the book come alive, to inspire students to think about it and to imagine, too.

To develop your read-aloud skills, start with a book you enjoyed as a child. The students will sense your fondness for the story.

Forging a personal link to a book, building the desire to read—these are important steps to reading success.

Do not crush these steps by having children read alone. Use them to lead to reading times you share, to hearing the stories together.

Hope Blecher-Sass
K-2 English
as a second language teacher
James Madison Primary School
Edison, New Jersey

Children should be exposed to a wide variety of literary styles. In childhood, the art in the illustrations and the art in the words are both equally important.

As a child grows older, the language, the message, and the significance of the book take precedence.

In our desire to improve reading instruction, too much of the pleasure of reading is being sidelined by an overemphasis on "drill and kill" skill instruction.

Phonics, decoding, and improving comprehension are all important parts of reading instruction, but they need to be played down until after the child has a true understanding of what books are, what purpose they serve, and why it is important to learn to read.

Avid readers do so as a hobby because they find pleasure in the activity!

Reading instruction for young children ought to consist of short, exciting, fun skill activities surrounded by longer periods of being "read to" and of practicing the other communication skills of listening, speaking, and experimenting with writing.

Andy Baumgartner
Kindergarten teacher
1999 Teacher of the Year
A. Brian Merry Elementary School
Augusta, Georgia

It's Here! It's Here!

On March 2, NEA members nationwide will be participating in Read Across America, the annual celebration of reading marking the birthday of Dr. Seuss.

For last-minute ideas on how to participate, check the Web at www.nea.org/readacross. You'll see what great events other members have planned. You'll find resources to distribute in your community. And you can log events NEA members in your neck of the woods created to foster a love of reading!

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READING RESOURCES

● The U.S. Department of Education is holding a Satellite Town Meeting on Reading March 21. The purpose of the meeting is to bring together communities, teachers, and parents to help create strong reading programs for students. For information, check the Internet at www.ed.gov/inits/stm/1999-2000.html.

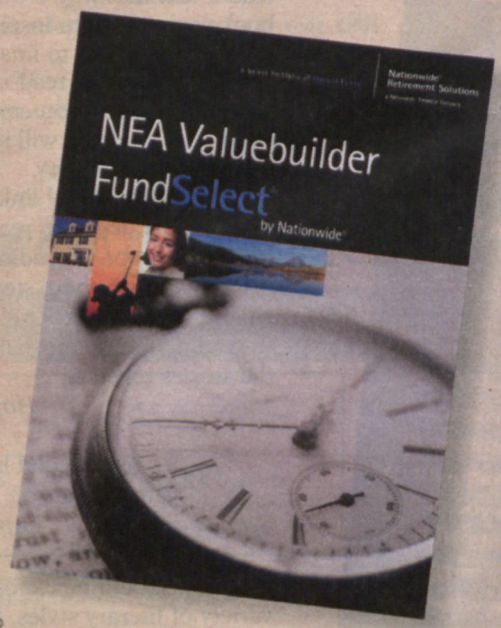
● *Helping Your Child Learn to Read*, also from the Department of Education, is a handy resource for your community. This guide helps parents understand that teaching and learning aren't mysteries that unfold only in school—they also happen when parents and children do simple things together. For free copies, write to the Consumer Information Center, Dept. 504F, Pueblo, CO 81009 or call 888/878-3256. The full text of this guide can be reviewed on the Web at www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Reading/index.html.

● A new publication from the International Reading Association —*Making a Difference Means Making It Different: Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction*—offers guidelines for reading programs from the perspective of the rights of students. It's available on the Web at www.reading.org.

A second publication from the International Reading Association, *Adolescent Literacy: A Position Statement*, is available through the online bookstore at the IRA Web site, www.bookstore.reading.org/.

Q: I know I should start saving for the future, but what's the best way to begin?

A.



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MFNT0300

Teacher Preparation: Accredit to the Profession

Fewer than half of the nation's teacher ed programs have received a critical seal of approval. An NEA-backed campaign is working to change all that.

Far too many U.S. classrooms lack a fully qualified, fully licensed teacher—this at a time when studies show the single most important contributor to higher student achievement is the presence of a qualified teacher.

Frustrating? You bet. But a group called NCATE is working to improve how America prepares its teachers.

How is NCATE improving teacher preparation?

NCATE—the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education—has developed standards for quality teacher preparation, and it accredits colleges and universities that meet these standards.

NCATE consists of 33 national education organizations including NEA, which helped launch it in 1954.

Do accredited schools graduate better teacher candidates?

ETS, the nation's biggest testing company, last spring released the largest study ever conducted to answer just this question.

The conclusion: College students "who enter institutions with NCATE-accredited programs have a higher likelihood of meeting licensing requirements than do students with similar college admissions scores from non-accredited institutions."

ETS reviewed records of 270,000 teacher candidates who had taken national teacher exams between 1995 and 1997.

Earlier studies found similar results. In the 1980s, Arkansas, North Carolina, and West Virginia required NCATE accreditation for all their schools of education. All three states saw above-average jumps in student achievement in the '90s, according to National Assessment of Educational Progress test scores.

NCATE-accredited institutions, the data clearly show, do produce stronger teacher candidates.

Unfortunately, only a little over 500 of the 1,300 schools, colleges, and departments of education that prepare teachers are NCATE-accredited.

Why aren't more teacher prep institutions NCATE-accredited?

Too many politicians still believe that "anybody can teach" and don't see a particular need for rigorous teacher training. So they don't take steps that would encourage schools of ed in their states to become nationally accredited.

On many college campuses, there's a different dynamic at work. Quality teacher preparation is expensive, and some universities simply don't want to pay the freight.

"By keeping the cost of teacher education low," explains NCATE President Art Wise, "universities generate profits that they use to support many other programs at the institution, including business, law, and medical schools."

How hard is it to get accredited?

To gain NCATE accreditation, an institution needs to meet standards that are set by teachers and other educators through a process that involves all education stakeholders.

Professionally trained volunteers—teachers, teacher educators, state and local policy-makers, public representatives—then visit campuses and examine how well the standards are met.

Are the standards up to date?

The NCATE standards are revised every five years. The next revision—NCATE 2000—will see a major shift from curriculum-oriented standards to performance-based standards that focus on what teacher candidates know and are able to do.

That is, NCATE 2000 will require schools of education to provide performance evidence of candidate competence.

"State licensing examination results will be made available to NCATE," points out NCATE President Wise. "These scores have not been available in the past."

The new standards will be approved this year and go into effect in 2001.

What's on the horizon?

A fairly bruising battle. A group of college presidents has formed a less-demanding accrediting alternative to NCATE called the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, or TEAC.

"These college officials are now lobbying state legislatures to win official recognition as the national accrediting agency for teacher preparation programs," notes Mary Elizabeth Teasley, the NEA government relations director.

That would be disastrous.

"TEAC hasn't adopted any standards. Institutions are measured against their own goals, much like an audit," points out Lynn Coffin, NEA's Teaching and Learning director.

"With no standards to measure quality," Coffin notes, "TEAC simply doesn't qualify as a national accrediting entity."

What's NEA doing?

Everything possible to strengthen NCATE.

NEA President Bob Chase is chair of NCATE's Executive Board for 1999-2000, and 130 NEA members—educators like New Mexico high school English teacher Eloy Gonzales—serve on NCATE boards and committees.

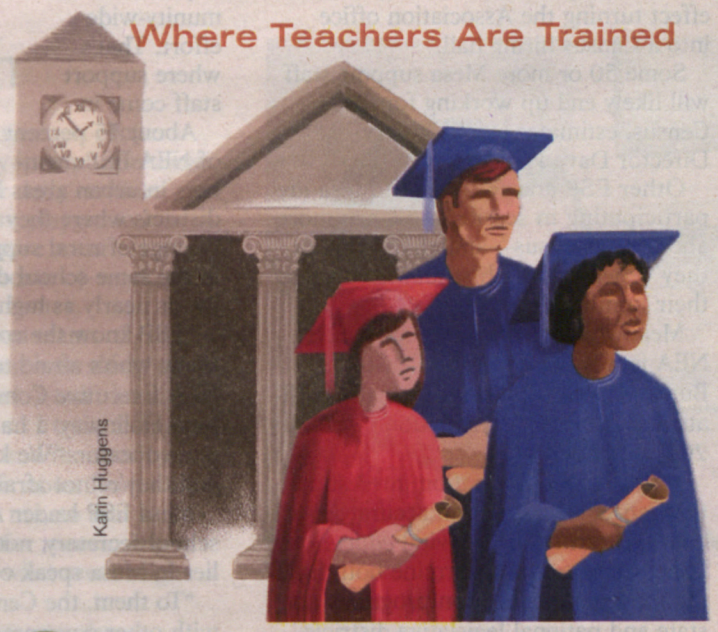
All NEA members can help by encouraging students who are thinking about becoming teachers to attend NCATE-accredited institutions.

"NCATE accreditation provides the foundation for a meaningful system of quality assurance for the teaching profession," says NEA President Chase. "All schools of education should bear this professional seal of approval." ✔

For more information, visit the NCATE Web site (www.ncate.org), which features a full list of NCATE-accredited institutions.

That same list appears in a detailed new book, *A Guide to College Programs in Teacher Preparation* ($24.95 plus $5.50 s&h, published by NCATE and Jossey Bass, 415/433-1740).

Where Teachers Are Trained



Karin Huggens

2/3 **Just two-thirds of all teachers who have gone through a teacher preparation program have gone through an NCATE-accredited institution.**

TEAMWORK

Counting Everyone

Education support staff and teachers in Mesa, Arizona, are lending support to efforts to make their local Census 2000 count as accurate as possible.

This March, when tens of millions of households across the country receive seven-question Census 2000 surveys in the mail, education support personnel in Mesa, Arizona, will be ready.

"The Association is more than a job insurance package—that's why we've gotten involved in the Census," says Mesa Education Support Personnel Association President Alice Swinehart.

This Mesa local, which represents 4,000 support staffers, is letting the Census Bureau use its office to orient and test for part-time Census jobs, in effect turning the Association office into a Census hiring hall.

Some 50 or more Mesa support staff will likely end up working for the Census, estimates local UniServ Director Dave Henderson.

Other ESP and teachers in Mesa are participating in sessions to learn more about the Census—and sharing what they've learned with students and their families.

Meanwhile, at the national level, NEA is working with the Census Bureau to encourage widespread "affiliate and member participation in Census 2000 activities."

Why all this Association interest in the Census? Ensuring an accurate count, it turns out, is a vital *education* issue. Census data determine both funding for federal education programs and state and national legislative districts.

Unfortunately, previous Census counts just haven't been accurate. The 1990 Census missed 8.4 million people, more than half of them children.

The Children's Defense Fund estimates that this Census, if it undercounts by the same amount as the last, will miss 52,000 children in Los Angeles alone.

Counting the people likely to be missed by Census 2000—people disproportionately young, poor, and minority—requires a community-wide effort. That's where support staff come in.

About 75 percent of NEA ESP members in urban areas live in the school districts where they work. And the percentage of rural support staff who work in the same school districts where they live is nearly as high.

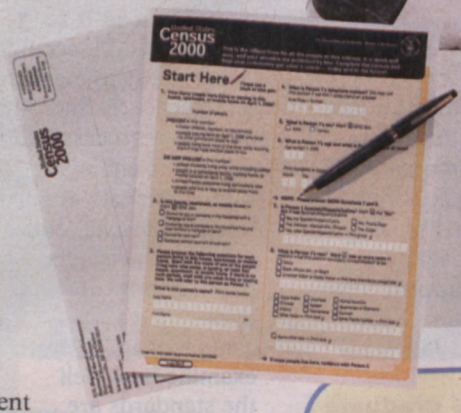
"ESP know the community—we know who's afraid to be counted," says NEA Executive Committee member Iona Holloway, a LaPlace, Louisiana, paraeducator. "We know these people, and they're not afraid of us."

Mesa ESP leader Alice Swinehart, a school secretary, notes that many families in Mesa speak only Spanish.

"To them, the Census is associated with other government agencies that they want nothing to do with, like the INS," she explains. "Most of our members live in Mesa—they can be a big help in finding and reassuring these families, so that they can get counted."

And if everyone gets counted, schools and students benefit. ✔

John Miller



Mesa, Arizona school secretary Alice Swinehart knows the Census count is important to her community.

Here are some tips to ensure an accurate count in your community:

- **Spread the word through materials tailored to your community, and recruit community leaders.**
- **Help the Census Bureau identify difficult-to-count areas and develop a plan. Assist in areas that may be difficult or dangerous.**
- **Recruit volunteers to help people fill out Census forms at Questionnaire Assistance Centers.**

For more ideas, as well as free fact sheets, curriculum materials, and information on the Census Bureau's Partnership program, visit the Census 2000 Web site at www.census.gov/dmd/www/2khome.htm, or call the U.S. Census Bureau Partnership and Data Services Branch at 301/457-2989; fax: 301/457-2992.

Going the Extra Mile

Last winter, two students who slipped under a school bus were saved by the safety practices of Chuck Raviart, a driver for Pennsylvania's Hempfield Area School District.

Here's how Raviart's system works: An older student exits the bus first, stands at the rear of the vehicle, and signals the driver by a hand wave when all the departing passengers are clear.

When two disembarking students slipped on the ice and fell under Raviart's bus, this procedure saved their lives—because Raviart did not receive the all-clear sign and would not move the bus until he got it.

The procedure worked so well, in fact, that Raviart wasn't even aware of the incident until the following morning. Upon learning of the averted tragedy, he was moved to tears.

Parents and children who live at that stop, the Suburban Acres Mobile Home Court, gave Raviart a plaque to express their appreciation for his devotion to kids and their safety.

No sooner did the cheers die down for Chuck Raviart than Michigan's Grand Rapids-Forest Hills school district honored its own heroic driver, 14-year veteran Sue Baker, with a plaque, a watch, and a dozen roses.

Last August, Baker quickly evacuated 42 elementary students from a brand-new bus when her yellow warning lights flashed irregularly and she saw smoke coming from under the hood.

No problem, thought Baker.

"We practice fire drills on the bus three times a year with the children," Baker points out. "The kids really reacted well."

The riders out of harm's way, Baker

RESOURCES

Help with IDEA 97 Training

The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities has produced a comprehensive training manual on the provisions and requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997.

The training package contains a 500-page curriculum binder with background information, resources, handouts, and training scripts and an overhead binder of 145 transparencies, available in English or Spanish. An addendum to the training package, currently being written, will provide information about the Federal IDEA regulations released March 12, 1999.

Nearly all of the materials may be downloaded free, in HTML or PDF formats, from the NICHCY Web site at www.nichcy.org (note that there are a large number of files to download). Printed copies of the training manual can be ordered for $175 a set from NICHCY, P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013 800/695-0285.

Got My Eye on You

The use of video cameras on school buses was a hot topic recently on NEA's ESP E-mail discussion list. Video cameras have been installed by school districts around the country with the stated purpose of helping maintain student discipline and safety on the buses.

But, based on experiences in their districts, several ESP activists believe that some employers are more interested in using the cameras to monitor the behavior of drivers than students.

As the NEA Resolutions put it, education employees must be guaranteed the rights of privacy, including freedom from audio or video surveillance without the prior written permission of the individual.

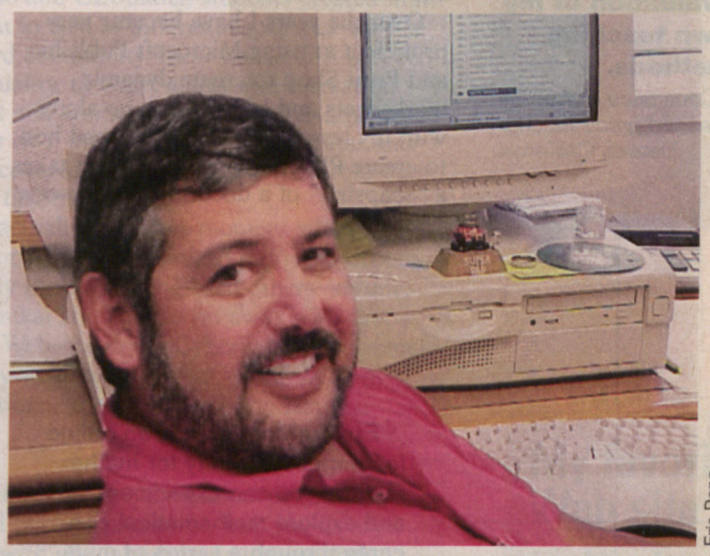
The ESP E-mail discussion list is a forum for NEA ESP members and staff to exchange information and opinions about ESP job issues and the issues of ESP within the Association.

Check the box at the right for information on how to subscribe to this free list.

Behind the Scenes

ESP is an automated mailing list open to all NEA members and staff who have access to Internet E-mail. ESP members are using this list to discuss a variety of issues. To join ESP, go to the "ESP List" page of the NEA ESP Web site, at www.nea.org/esp/converse/esplist.htm, and follow the "how to subscribe" instructions.

As school safety officer, Oscar Vega is responsible for helping to keep more than 38,000 employees and students safe and healthy.



Eric Penn

TEAM PLAYER

Ensuring Safety and Health

Name: Oscar Vega

Job Title: Safety officer for Salem-Keizer Public Schools in Salem, Oregon.

On the side: I am also the President of the Oregon School Safety Officers Association, a group of people that are responsible for safety and health in school districts across the state.

Previous Experience: 20 years in safety inspection positions with GTE WESGO. Five years as a school board member in Redwood City, California.

What I do: My primary responsibility is ensuring the safety and health of the employees and students in Salem's second largest school district.

How I keep the schools safe:

I believe it's important to create a positive safety culture in each school. From the principal down to the students, it's everyone's responsibility to help keep themselves and others safe and healthy.

Knowledge is the key to safety. I regularly educate employees on proper procedures, and they incorporate these procedures into their daily routines and classrooms. From playground safety to first aid, I give a variety of presentations to educate co-workers on important safety issues.

I also rely heavily on teams of educators and staff who make up safety committees in each school. I can't be at 55 schools at one time, so I train teams to perform inspections and monitoring injuries. They submit notes from their monthly meetings to me, so that I can monitor the schools for reoccurring problems and know what areas might need more training.

Regular inspections are also important. I accompany state and fire inspectors on visits to the schools to ensure we meet the Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards as well as fire codes. If something needs to be corrected, I make sure it is done swiftly.

How I see the schools today:

I think we've made a major turnaround in the safety culture in our school district, through education and heightened awareness. We've made safety a big part of the educational program in our schools, and, as a result, we have a better learning environment. ✔

emptied her fire extinguisher on the flames—ignited by an electrical malfunction—and bolted from the bus. In less than five minutes after the driver noticed the light problem and smoke, the bus was engulfed by an inferno.

When the smoke died down, Baker received countless thank-you cards, letters, and flowers from grateful students, parents, and well-wishers. And parents of students riding the flaming bus have given the hero a trip to California to visit her sisters—but not while school is in session.

That's because highly professional ESP like Sue Baker are the best insurance a kid could have.

Illinois ESP leader David Arnold never misses a chance to link people together. That's what makes a good organizer.

In 1998, this Brownstown custodian served on the Illinois Education Association's Communications Committee with IEA-NEA Student Program member Lisa Webber. When Webber graduated college and went on to work as a kindergarten teacher in Shungnak, Alaska, she stayed in touch with Arnold—who is now the committee chair.

"After school started this past fall," Arnold reports, "Lisa E-mailed me and told me a little about Shungnak and her students. I saw there was a good comparison between her class at Shungnak Elementary, which is above the Arctic Circle, and the kindergarten class in my school in south central Illinois."

Arnold linked Webber and her kids with teacher Suzanne Stinebring and her kindergartners at Brownstown Elementary.

The rest is, well, elementary.

Learning

TIPS FOR THE WIRED CLASSROOM

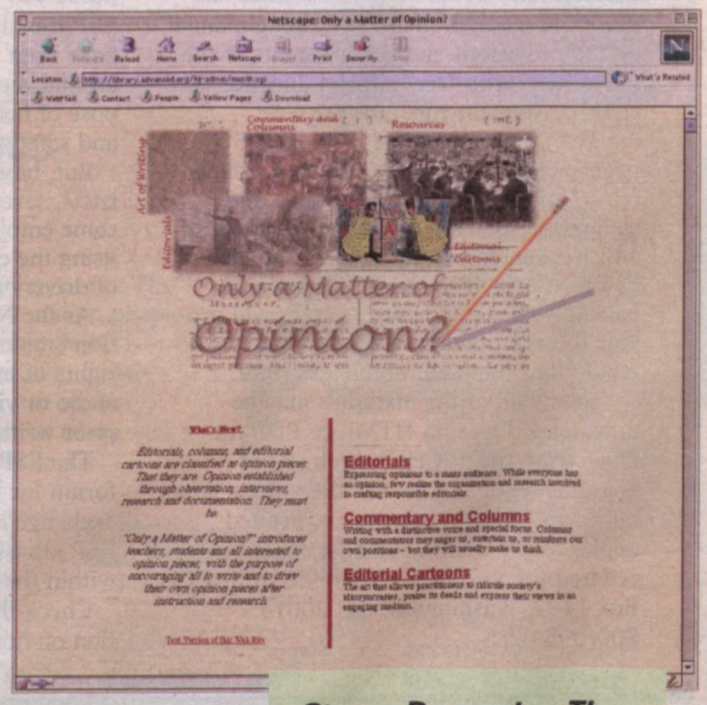
Draw Your Own Opinion

I recently worked with two other teachers—and a computer-savvy student—on a comprehensive Web site that explores persuasive writing and editorial writing. You can check it out at http://library.thinkquest.org/50084.

The site, called Only a Matter of Opinion?, features extensive links to writing resources, a teacher's guide with lesson plans and assessment tools, and The Teacher Exchange, an interactive discussion area just for educators.

You'll find several other excellent teaching units at the ThinkQuest site (http://library.thinkquest.org)—most made by students, but several made by educators.

Diane Weber
High school English teacher
Birmingham, Alabama
tomeweber@yahoo.com



Strong Persuader: The Only a Matter of Opinion Web site is a rich source for editorials, columns, and editorial cartoons.

My favorite Web site

...is my own, www.pe.net/~ladyp, which I created as part of my district's mentor teacher project. Developing the site has been a learning experience for me—and a self-evaluation of my own teaching methods.

Constance Polhemus
Second grade teacher
Hemet, California

Teacher Resource Site

I've developed a Web site called Teaching Resources, at http://home.att.net/~teaching, to share ideas and activities with other teachers.

Over the years I have become very proficient at using Microsoft Publisher and Print Shop to create dynamic worksheets and handouts to go along with my lessons. I recently learned how to create PDF files—a format that takes a "snapshot" of a document to preserve fonts, graphics, and formatting across different computer platforms—from my favorite activities, and I began adding them to my site. Now others can download the activity sheets and print them out.

The activities include hands-on math and science lessons, literature circle activities, cooperative learning lessons, and more.

I've also added blackline masters of graphic organizers, homework passes, weekly progress reports, daily contracts, and classroom management tools.

Teachers are welcome to print out these activities and use them for free with their own classes. I add new activities to the site a few times every month. You can join an E-mail list and I'll notify you when there's new content.

Laura Candler
Fifth grade teacher
Fayetteville, North Carolina
Candlers@worldnet.att.net

Tech Tools

- **ExploreMath.com is an online learning community for mathematics. You can experiment with and explore mathematical concepts through a series of multimedia activities. Free membership lets educators post their own course materials online.**
- **A Proposal Writing Short Course (http://fdncenter.org/onlib/shortcourse/prop1.html), designed for educational technology grant proposals, has all you need to get started on that winning application.**
- **ENC's Integrating Technology in the Classroom page (http://www.enc.org/focus/topics/edtech/articles/index.htm) has articles and resources on making the most of technology in your classroom.**
- **Just about all the resources that any science teacher would ever need can be found at IMSEnet (http://www.ncsu.edu/imse/). There are links to grant sites, Internet project ideas, mailing lists, shareware sites, science museums, and more.**

Practice Printer CPR

When you find something great on a Web site and want to take it with you, don't just hit "print." Depending on the site, you might print 20 or more pages when you only need a few paragraphs. You might also get a load of graphics that can clog the printer.

To prolong the life of our printers and to conserve resources, we teach students to practice CPR. This means that they highlight and COPY the information that they need, PASTE it into a word processing document, and REDUCE the size of the type. The new document contains only the information that is really needed.

CPR is a memorable term, and the process encourages students to evaluate information rather than simply pressing the print button.

Daniel Russo
High school library media director
Batavia, Illinois
danielrusso@batavia.k12.il.us

Wise Owl Sites

I work with home independent study students and provide weekly small group and classroom experiences in science for fourth through sixth graders.

For an owl pellet investigation activity, I found several Web sites that greatly enhanced our work. We were able to hear three different barn owl calls at www.naturesongs.com (a wonderful site for many types of animal, bird, and insect sounds). An investigation data sheet and study questions can be found at www.ceismc.gatech.edu/zooary/zoo/tidbit/owl.html. A set of comprehension questions concerned with predator-prey interactions is located at http://users.nac.net/jmele/Tyto.pretest.html.

Finally, we were able to view the results of owl pellet investigations from other students and get ideas on how to display our own results at http://bend.k12.or.us/cascadems2/Johnson/owlpeltlab.htm (click on"photos"). There are numerous other sites with great information on protecting these important raptors, including directions for building nesting boxes!

Jewel Barbour
K-6 teacher/science specialist
Chico, California
jbarbour@cusd.chico.k12.ca.us

TALK TO US:

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom @list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Walk on Water

Sixth graders in Hawaii build a winning Web site—and discover their own multiple intelligences.

Who:
Wanda Harris, sixth grade lead teacher, Lanikai Elementary School, Kailua, Hawaii

E-mail:
Wanda_Harris/LANIKAI/HIDOE@notes.k12.hi.us

Inspiration:
Wanda Harris's students were already creating a Web site examining water in their community when they got wind of the 1999 International CyberFair Contest, a major Internet competition for K-12 students around the world.

Not only did they now have a deadline to work toward, but their project entered another dimension. Once students realized they were going to publish their work globally and be judged, the bar of expectations was raised.

"I have a project-based classroom with authentic assessments as a concept, which gives the kids an opportunity to do group work and to use multiple intelligences," explains Harris. "One of the benefits of this unorthodox classroom is the opportunity for authentic learning."

The "constructivist climate" allows students to "make sense of information for themselves," says Harris. And developing a Web site on water made sense because the ocean is only a block away from the school.

To pull off such a project in a classroom of 37 students, a quarter of whom have special needs, Harris needed another pair of hands. Longtime collaborator Lauren Apiki, executive director of the LET Academy, a nonprofit organization that promotes technology in education, teamed up with Harris a few days a week to mentor students through the process.

Wanda Harris's students work in a "virtual office" setting, using communal tables and computer stations or visiting the beach for research. "Work takes place where it needs to," she says.

Photos by Ray Tanaka/Photoplant

Using Macs, a digital camera, and software programs including HyperStudio and GifBuilder, students created multimedia Web pages that looked at different aspects of water's role in their windward community, from waves, fish life, ecobalance, and water quality, to water safety and recreation.

Students illustrated and animated their pages and recorded sound—creating their own music with slack key guitar and ukulele after they discovered that copyright laws forbid them from uploading their favorite CDs.

Says Harris, "This actually became a moment when strengths that are not normally recognized in the classroom created an opportunity for celebrating each others' abilities."

The result? The Lanikai students swam away with first place for their Water Web site in the CyberFair's environmental awareness category—competing against schools from Singapore, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Kansas.

Lesson:
Working in groups, students not only learned about collaboration, cooperation, and time management, but, Harris says, some of her students with special needs, "aware of their potential success in a new and equalizing medium, became much more tenacious about finishing. Students recognized their strengths and blossomed."

Struggles, such as having too many chiefs, were also part of the learning curve, says Harris. But grouping, she says, "should not be over-controlled because life experiences need the forum of the classroom and a safe environment where failure is okay."

Following a 10-step process for multimedia project development (outlined on the Water Web site) allowed Harris and Apiki to monitor students' learning—and to keep a big project that integrated technology and content on track.

Harris estimates it took 126 hours to complete the Web site, but, she admits, time is difficult to compute because so much of the work was integrated into each day's assignments.

Click:
"This project reinforces that learning is not linear," Harris says. "Students need to use their multiple intelligences to get to the end results by employing various methods and interacting with each other—not by just having the teacher be on stage." ✔

For more information: go to www.lanikai.k12.hi.us to jump into the Water Web site. Log on to www.globalschoolhouse.org to find out more about the International CyberFair Contest.

My favorite Web site

Looking for human bioethics materials? Minnesota public radio, at http://news.mpr.org/features/199711/20_smiths_fertility, has Great Real Audio programs on a wide range of human reproductive issues.

Jerry Jensen
High school biology teacher
Luverne, Minnesota

Bytes for Beginners

Lately I've been inundated with E-mail from Web sites I've visited. How did they get my address? Can I stop unwanted mail?

When you spend time at some Web sites, a small file—a cookie—is sent to your computer's hard drive to keep track of what you do on the site. If you give your E-mail address, a site may retain it from your visit.

How do you turn down these treats? Configure your browser to warn you when a Web site offers it a cookie. Then you'll have the option of accepting the cookie or not.

- In Netscape Navigator, choose Edit, Preferences, then Advanced, and select a privacy option from the "cookies" menu.
- In Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0, go to the View menu and choose Internet Options, then Advanced, and select a privacy option from the cookies item on the pull-down menu.

Cookies can make your life on the Web better by allowing you to customize the content you see when you visit a site—such as your local weather or horoscope. When you shop online, cookies retain information about items in your shopping cart until you're ready to buy.

It's impossible for a Web server to access any private information about you through cookies. But if you're really into cloaking, visit www.anonymizer.com. You can type the URL of any site you want to visit into the "Anonymizer" Web browser, and it'll take you there with complete anonymity.

Have comments or questions about technology? Go to www.nea.org/cet, or E-mail your questions to webeditor@dear.nea.org.

On Top of the World

Wisconsin teacher climbs Mt. Everest and sets students' sights on fitness.

Barbara Wentworth

Ever wanted to fulfill a dream that was as big as a mountain? The students at Magee Elementary School have done just that, through teacher **Barbara Wentworth's** physical education program. Last November, Wentworth climbed Mt. Everest, in a three-week expedition, and her students "climbed" just as high.

For the past nine years, Wentworth has engaged her students in an annual fitness destination goal. Last year they "climbed" Mt. Everest by logging fitness miles they accumulated outside the classroom and converting them into feet.

"Having a healthy, active lifestyle is what it's all about," says Wentworth.

Wentworth's Everest lesson was actually about more than fitness. In an interdisciplinary approach to learning, the students also met David Breashears, the director of the IMAX movie "Everest, Mountain Without Mercy," and learned about Himalayan art and culture, temperature, and nutrition.

The students also followed Wentworth as she climbed miles above sea level and reported back to the school through digital pictures and recorded audio broadcasts that were uploaded to a Web site.

"The project was the greatest experience of my life, both professionally and personally," she says.

For more information on Wentworth's Everest program, visit www.kmsd.edu/everest.htm. ✔

Lessons in Learning

For **Linda Hallenbeck,** Ohio's first "teacher-in-residence," the journey from her fifth-grade classroom at East Woods Elementary School to an office in downtown Columbus's Riffe Center has been a challenging and delightful one.

A National Board Certified teacher and winner of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching of Mathematics, Hallenbeck's role is to bring an educator's perspective and sensibilities on education issues to Governor Bob Taft.

During her nine-month tenure, Hallenbeck will be responsible for chairing the governor's Teacher Advisory Committee, a voluntary 24-member board, and conducting Teacher Town Meetings throughout the state to help teachers improve their work and enhance their professional development opportunities.

Hallenbeck will also continue working on the development of OhioReads, a volunteer-based reading program created to improve the reading skills of Ohio children before fourth grade.

For Hallenbeck, the best part of teaching is the children.

"They have such wonderful minds," she says. "They have such a capacity to explore and to shape ideas."

Hallenbeck grew up one of 13 children on a farm in a small Iowa town. When it came time for college, Hallenbeck had the encouragement of her family and a close teacher.

"My mission," she adds, "is to do what's best for all Ohio teachers because when you do, you do what's best for all Ohio students." ✔

Ohio Education Association

Hawaii State Teachers Association

Starting Again at 65

For 39 years, Hawaii NEA member **Ku'ulei Ihara** has taught in a very different classroom, the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. She's the staffer who arranges for students and teachers to tour the museum and helps plan visits so they fit with teachers' learning objectives.

The museum houses an extensive collection representing Hawaii's natural and cultural history.

"One thing I've learned being here all these years," explains Ihara, "is to be adaptable and embrace change."

Ihara demonstrated her adaptability when she began training at age 65 to become a crew member for the Polynesian Voyaging Society. Society members take extensive trips in native Hawaiian canoes. For Ihara, joining the society meant working out daily, including using weights. Ihara's first trip was from Seattle to Vancouver and then down to San Diego.

Having lived up to that challenge, Ihara still enjoys helping kids understand the native Hawaiian culture.

"The key is being flexible and calm," explains Ihara, "so the kids pick up on that and understand they're in a museum." ✔

Custodian Connects With Kids

"Ready... aim...fire!" is the shout you'll hear during a reenactment on the battlefield at the Fort at Number Four in Charlestown, New Hampshire. That's where you'll find military veteran **Wayne Mitchell,** the fort's lead historical interpreter and founder of the Upper Valley Living History Society.

A custodian at Woodsville High School, Mitchell goes the extra mile to take his love of history off the battlefield and into the classrooms. Dressed in authentic clothing, with ornately original equipment, Mitchell portrays soldiers from the Revolutionary, Civil, and French and Indian Wars. Mitchell also explains such topics as how the fort got its name.

"Number Four was the name of an agricultural settlement in colonial times," he notes. "The settlements were numbered by the Colony of Massachusetts according to their distance from Ft. Dummer."

Mitchell takes pride in encouraging his own children to learn about their heritage. His kids and other members of his extended family participate with him in reenactments.

"We don't just do military events," he says. "We do demonstrations of everyday life. We show how blacksmiths made tools and how farmers harvested crops. We demonstrate how women spun wool and cooked."

Mitchell also helps educators by putting them in touch with other historical reenactment groups and other educational resources.

"It's important for children to be able to see and touch history," he says. ✔

Carol Castarphen

John Miller

Students Book Club RIF

At Club RIF, you won't find palm trees or tropical drinks with pink umbrellas—just 1,800 high schoolers excited about reading and a teacher with the energy and enthusiasm to match.

NEA member **Pat Heck,** a corrective reading teacher at Red Mountain High School in Mesa, Arizona, is one of Reading Is Fundamental's 1999 Volunteers of the Year. In 1988, Heck launched a RIF program that involves students of all reading abilities in fun, book-based activities.

"Several of my corrective readers speak very limited English, a few are visually impaired, and some read below the fourth-grade level," says Heck. "No matter what their reading level is, they work on Club RIF assemblies, and we train them to become reading buddies for young children."

Club members sponsor read-a-thons, all-school book distributions, and an annual carnival. They're one-on-one reading buddies to 150 second graders at nearby Salk Elementary School. They also tutor over 1,300 children each week and distribute books at two Native American communities, a homeless shelter, and to children of migrant workers.

"When these students are teaching children how important reading is, they sell themselves on the idea," says Heck. "They start to read; they finish a book. On standardized tests, I've seen them gain two or three years in one semester." ✔

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** All other bank rates in the comparison chart are accurate as of 1/3/00, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and rates may be higher for higher balances. Source – *BISYS Research Services*, 1/3/00.

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MWNT0300

Bad Teeth: A Bite Out of Learning

Oral health problems last year caused students to lose 52 million hours of classroom time. Dushanka Kleinman, the deputy director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research at the National Institutes of Health, recently explained how oral health impacts learning in an interview with Da'aiyah Bilal of NEA's Health Information Network.

The surgeon general has made oral health a priority concern. Why has this become such a hot topic?

Children miss 52 million hours of school each year due to oral health problems. About 12.5 million days of restricted activity, every year, result from dental symptoms or treatment visits.

Studies have shown a link between oral disease and low birth weight, cardiovascular disease, respiratory infections, and diabetes. And tooth decay is five times more common than asthma.

Knowing all this, wouldn't you make it a priority to find out more if you were the Surgeon General?

What's the latest on what causes cavities—and how to prevent them?

Dental caries, or tooth decay, is an infection caused by bacteria called *Streptococcus mutans*. Caries is transmitted directly, from person to person. Typically, caries is transmitted from an adult mother to child—think about times when you have seen people taste a child's food before feeding it to the child.

In very basic terms, the bacteria thrive on sugar and form acid that eats away at the tooth enamel, causing cavities.

If a cavity goes untreated, it can spread to the pulp of the tooth, causing inflammation and an abscess at the root. Eventually, this process ends in tooth extraction.

Cavities can be prevented with sealants. But a great deal of research is now being generated to find out about different modes of transmission. For instance, pregnant mothers with periodontal disease are having their teeth cleaned to see what the connection is between dental caries and low birth weight.

How does poor oral health affect a student's learning or performance?

Karin Huggens

The first thing that comes to my mind is pain. Pain from oral disease will keep students from learning. Any kind of pain or discomfort around the head would distract a child from learning.

Pain and swelling are both symptoms of severe disease. Sadly, these severe cases are prevalent in classrooms, especially in low-income areas.

More than three-fourths of tooth decay in permanent teeth is found in only one-fourth of children between the ages of 5 and 17. African American children exhibit twice as much decay as white children. Black and Mexican American children are also three times less likely than whites to have sealants in their permanent teeth.

What can educators do to improve students' oral health?

It's important to improve the health literacy of educators, parents, and students about basic issues like hygiene and risky behavior.

Unlike taking care of your ears, for instance, caring for the mouth takes daily attention, as well as access to professional care and the ability to receive care in a timely manner.

One particularly important thing to remember: This disease is preventable. Prevention means self-care, fluoride, and sealants.

Schools can also boost prevention by considering what's in the vending machines they have on site. Vending machines can contribute to a wide range of health problems. I realize that these machines are income-generators for schools, but changing some of their contents could make a difference.

Other strategies are also important. At Washington Heights Junior High, in New York City, an emergency dental clinic in the school is helping keep kids in the classroom. Connecticut is trying to implement some statewide treatment and prevention programs.

Communities are also launching broad-based education efforts—talking, for instance, about fluoride in low-income areas where people may not have access to adequate sources of fluoride.

Finally, educators can help by correcting misconceptions. For example, oral health has been considered a luxury, not a necessity. People don't think oral health has any serious effect on overall health.

You hear people constantly say things like, "Oh, they're just baby teeth, they'll fall out anyway." They don't realize that if you have dental caries early in childhood, you have a good predictor of future decay. ✔

HEALTH RESOURCES

- **Entertaining classroom activities that promote good oral health can be found on the American Dental Association's Web site at www.ada.org. Visit the Kid's Corner and find coloring sheets, games, and a calendar that reminds kids to floss each day—all can be printed right off the Web site. Children's dental health materials and other educational aides to hand out can be ordered online or by calling 800/947-4746.**
- **Visit the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research's Web site at www.nidcr.nih.gov for the latest news related to oral health topics. This comprehensive site features the surgeon general's oral health report and conference scheduled for June. The site also includes a variety of quick factoids about pediatric oral health on the Kids-Byte page.**
- **With millions of children in the United States now without health insurance, the U.S. Department of Education has launched the Insure Kids Now! Through Schools Campaign to encourage schools and communities to work together to enroll children in health insurance programs. For a list of state and community dental benefits resources, call 800/USA-LEARN or visit www.insurekidsnow.gov.**

NEA·HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

Can We Talk?

The NEA Health Information Network has introduced a new Web site corresponding to the Network's highly praised *Can We Talk?* program.

***Can We Talk?* is a series of four workshops designed to teach parents how to better communicate with their children about sexuality and healthy relationships.**

The new Web site uses the whimsical *Can We Talk?* cartoons to offer an overview of the program. Posted online are technical assistance for communities interested in implementing *Can We Talk?* and profiles of program sites across the nation.

Additional resources related to parenting, evaluation information, and ordering of *Can We Talk?* materials are online, too.

It's all at www.canwetalk.org.

Kick Butts Day

April 5, 2000 is Kick Butts Day. You can encourage students to become advocates by standing up to tobacco and fighting against youth tobacco use. To request a free activity guide, visit the Web at www.kickbuttsday.org.

Award Nominations

The NEA Health Information Network is now accepting nominations for the 2000 Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Award. NEA members can apply themselves or nominate an outstanding person working to educate others in their community about cancer.

All applications will be judged on several key criteria, ranging from involvement in local, state, or national cancer education, support, or advocacy groups to involvement in activities that directly affect NEA members or other school employees.

Judges will also be looking for applications that show work with minorities or underserved women, and they'll want to know, as well, how the nominee has been personally affected by cancer (Is the nominee a cancer survivor, or family or friend of someone who has died of cancer?).

NEA members can call 800/718-8387 for a nomination form or fill out a form online at www.neahin.org.

The deadline for nominations is September 1.

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**All other bank APYs shown in the comparison chart are valid as of 1/3/00, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and a term of 18 months. Source–*BISYS Research Services*, 1/3/00.

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CDNT0300

Mutual Fund Managers Make The Calls, You Pay the Taxes

Q: I did not sell any stocks or mutual funds in 1999, but I still have taxable gains. How did this happen?

A: This is one of the frustrations of mutual funds. You may not have sold any shares last year, but the mutual fund manager still bought and sold securities in the fund.

A mutual fund pays no taxes. All the profits, losses, and taxes are passed through to the shareholders, who are the owners of the fund. The 1099 form shows you your share of the gains.

There is another piece of bad news here. A couple of years ago, the capital gains tax was reduced to 20 percent on assets held for over one year. That's good for a long-term investor.

But short-term capital gains, those on assets held less than one year, are taxable at your highest marginal tax rate, which can be as high as 39.6 percent. Add to that state taxes and you see that investors can lose a big chunk of their gains to taxes.

Q: We got hit hard by Hurricane Floyd. Our insurance didn't cover the whole bill. Can we claim the uninsured loss as a deduction?

A: It depends on how big your loss was. Casualty losses from fire, storm, shipwreck, theft, and so forth are subject to a $100 floor. In other words, you must subtract $100 from the amount of your loss.

Beyond that, you can write off only the amount of the loss that exceeds 10 percent of your adjusted gross income.

The 1999 U.S. Master Tax Guide lists various types of damage that qualify. Hurricane is first, followed by flood, quarry blast, vandalism, sonic boom, earthquake, and earthslide.

Damage or loss caused by an "unusual and unprecedented drought can be treated as a casualty loss," the guide says, which might be good news to farmers and families in the Northeast, which was struck by drought last summer.

The key is whether a loss is from "sudden force." So the Internal Revenue Service takes the position that termite damage does not qualify, for example, although some courts have allowed it. Similarly, loss of trees from Dutch elm disease does not meet the IRS "suddenness" test.

Q: I did some computer consulting and earned $12,000. Is this money eligible for a retirement account?

A: It certainly is. You are eligible to put up to $2,000 of that money in a regular IRA or a Roth IRA. You have until April 15 to open and fund your account.

How to choose? The regular IRA provides a tax deduction for your contribution as well as tax deferral on your earnings. You pay tax on everything when you pull it out in retirement.

There is no current tax deduction for the Roth. But the money that you put into a Roth is never taxed again, making it an extremely attractive retirement saving vehicle.

Eligibility for the Roth IRA is phased out for single taxpayers with incomes between $95,000 and $110,000 and for married taxpayers with incomes between $150,000 and $160,000.

Q: Is there a minimum amount of money I need to see a financial planner?

A: No. Some planners do require a minimum of $1 million or even several million dollars before they will do business with you. But many others are happy to start small with someone who is committed to investing and to building a sound financial future.

Finding a good planner is a lot easier than it used to be because people with credentials like MBAs or law, engineering, education, and psychology degrees have entered the field.

Look for someone who is a certified financial planner (CFP), a designation issued by the Certified Financial Planner Standards Board. That's a good place to start.

Obviously, you want someone who is fair, honest, knowledgeable, and experienced. Other professionals, like accountants and lawyers, can be a good source of referrals.

Most importantly, though, you want someone you click with, who shares your values and will help you unlock your potential. ✔

—Mary Rowland

Mary Rowland is a regular contributor to several major financial planning magazines.

Thrifty Educator

Each month, NEA members offer their best ideas for saving money at the workplace. This month's tips come from Suzanne Wargo, a media specialist from William J. Johnson Middle School in Colchester, Connecticut, and Jackie Stoklas, a fourth grade teacher from Holderman Elementary School in Tempe, Arizona.

Suzanne Wargo: "Frequently people donate books, magazines, and other materials to the media center. These donations are often duplicates of what I already have or not appropriate for our age group. So I keep a brightly decorated box called 'Adopt-a-Book . . . Plus!' I put all books, magazines, scrap paper, recycled binders from workshops, and freebees from workshops in this box. The kids love getting something for free and often come to the media center just to see what I have in the box. It's a great way to recycle older books that would just collect dust and get kids to read who might not otherwise pick up a book."

Jackie Stoklas: "Gift bags decorate my classroom in a very practical way. I pinned some to the wall behind my desk to hold happygrams, attendance slips, and hall passes so that they don't get lost in the clutter of my desk. And I use a large gift bag to hide an object for a 20 questions game and another for a birthday bag that holds special markers for the birthday child to use. They look like decorations and are a great help to the organizationally challenged."

Karin Huggens

FACTOID

90 percent of NEA members are approved for the NEA MemberCare® Long-Term Care Insurance Program, as opposed to 75 percent approval for the general population with similar products.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Many of us are bombarded almost daily with spectacular offers for low-interest credit cards. That's why NEA Member Benefits has issued a Consumer Advisory on "Things To Look Out For When Shopping For A Credit Card." The advisory warns of practices such as penalty rates, shorter grace periods, fees for cash advances, and two-cycle billing. To read more about the NEA credit card advisory, visit the NEA Member Benefits Web site at www.neamb.com.

Preparing for retirement can be an arduous task. There's a lot to think about. Did you save enough to adequately fund your lifestyle for another 20-30 years? What about health care? The NEA MemberCare® Medicare Supplement Program is there to help you over that hurdle. With rates as much as 15 percent lower than other plans, the NEA MemberCare® Medicare Supplement Program offers NEA members and their spouses or domestic partners all of the same plan options and benefits as other plans plus more. Through the NEA program, you can get discounts on dental care, chiropractic care, vision care, and prescription drugs. You even get to choose your own doctor or hospital. And the plan is portable from state to state. So when you're putting your retirement plan together, think about NEA MemberCare® Medicare Supplement Plan. You can't afford not to!

At-Risk Kids Get on the Right Track

Long Beach teacher, students chronicle a tale of tolerance.

THE FREEDOM WRITERS DIARY
How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing To Change Themselves and the World Around Them
With **Erin Gruwell**,
Main Street Books/Doubleday,
$12.95, 280 pages

Flash back to September 1996. Erin Gruwell, fresh out of college, gets her first full-time assignment at Woodrow Wilson High in San Diego. Her students are 150 freshmen, and most of them, it's fair to say, don't really want to be in Gruwell's English classes.

Now flash forward to December 1999. Erin Gruwell is teaching at a local university, and, has just announced that she is running for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. And all 150 of the students who began their high school careers with her four years ago—every single one of them—is in college. Many are working to elect Erin Gruwell.

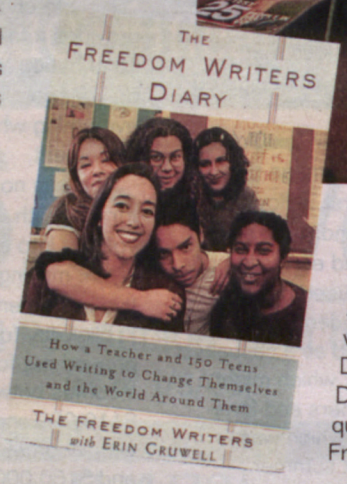
What happened in between 1996 and 1999 is what's between the covers of this book. It really is a tale of what can happen when students whose academic interests are practically nonexistent hook up with a teacher who believes in them and in herself.

"These were students who were gang members, alienated, kids who didn't want to talk with one another or work in groups," Gruwell told *NEA Today* recently. "Early on I intercepted an ugly racial caricature one of the students had drawn. So I decided to build the classes around discussions of tolerance."

Gruwell chose two books written about teenagers—*Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo.*

Gradually, the students began to draw parallels between the books' characters and their own lives. The key was having the students record their thoughts in diaries that led to the students dubbing themselves the Freedom Writers, honoring the South's original Freedom Riders.

AP/Wide World


THE FREEDOM WRITERS DIARY
How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them
THE FREEDOM WRITERS with ERIN GRUWELL

"I remember many nights staying till 11, weekends, too," says Gruwell. "We had a Readathon for Tolerance that raised money to go on field trips."

Gruwell helped bring Miep Gies, the Dutch woman who sheltered the Frank family, to her school.

"My classroom became students' safe haven, much like the attic where Anne Frank hid out or the Sarajevo basement where Zlata went during the war in Sarajevo," she points out. "The kids wanted to be away from violence and family problems."

In their junior year, several of the Freedom Writers journeyed with Gruwell to Washington, D.C. to deliver their stories to Secretary of Education Richard Riley. Their diaries won the Spirit of Anne Frank Award, which is supported by Doubleday books. Doubleday subsequently published the Freedom Writers book.

Funds from the sale of this book go for college tuition for the Freedom Writers and maintain The Tolerance Education Foundation, which Gruwell founded in 1997.

The foundation promotes tolerance education and plans to issue a tolerance curriculum for secondary school students. Write the Foundation at 2029 Century Park East, suite 4000, Los Angeles, CA 90067. Attention: Don Parris.

Erin Gruwell is currently teacher in residence at California State University, where she works with prospective teachers. ✔

EXCERPT

"Ms. Gruwell stood on the desk and began to talk about 'change.' I thought, 'What is this lady trying to do?'... I guess I was offered an opportunity that not many people have... I was always known as the person that was going to be a druggie, or get pregnant before I turned fourteen... Now I have the chance to prove them wrong."

Sophomore year: Diary 31

"Remember back in our freshman year, people still didn't understand the importance of a pen instead of a gun... But look at us now, the sure-to-drop-out kids are sure to reach higher education... These urban kids, however, were never truly given the chance to prove that if only given the opportunity, we could rise to the occasion; and rise to the occasion we have."

Senior year, Diary 142

BOOKS by NEA Members

The Sexually Abused Child: A Parent's Guide to Coping and Understanding
Kathleen Flynn Mach, MSW
Sadly, reports of sexual abuse of children are on the rise. This book describes the important warning signs of abuse for parents and caregivers to watch for. It also discusses topics that include supporting your child and therapy and healing strategies.
83 pp., $9.95 plus $3.50 s&h from Family Insight Books, P.O. Box 148, Williamsburg, MI 49690 , 800/507-2665.

Kids First! Family Education Program
Jennifer Burton Bauer
Teachers can help parents make learning at home fun with this imaginative book. An easy-to-follow resource guide, *Kids First!* covers the home environment, motivation and self-esteem, homework, study skills and test taking, parent-teacher relationships, discipline and values, reading, and fun learning activities.
138 pp., $12.95 plus $3 s&h from Kids First! 13700 Santa Lucia Rd., Atascadero, CA 93422, 805/461-9696.

Zipper, The Kid with ADHD
Caroline Janover.
This funny yet realistic tale about a boy with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) will encourage children with the disorder to find ways to manage their behavior and give their friends a look at what it's like to have the disorder. The book includes an appendix of information about ADHD, along with a list of support organizations, and a reading list.
164 pp.,$11.95 plus $4 s&hfrom Woodbine House, 6510 Bells Mill Rd, Bethesda, MD 20817. 800/843-7323.

"Mommy...this is hard for me"
A Perspective on the Student with Special Needs Who Is Included Within the Regular Public School Classroom
Michael C. Abraham.
Follow the educational experiences of a boy with special needs, Timmy, from his first day of kindergarten through his high school graduation. The discussion, along with Timmy's story, takes a close look at many issues teachers must face with inclusion.
71 pp., $12 plus $5 s&h to Educational Systems Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 96, Kearney, Nebraska 68848, 308/234-6261.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Media Ethics

Students and teachers in high school and college can take an in-depth look at the media with *Media Ethics: Where do you draw the line*? Using a case study approach to understanding news coverage and journalistic decision-making, this guide also comes with transparencies. $25 includes s&h from Newseum Attn: Education Center, 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209 703/284-3545, fax 703/522-4831. On the Web at www.newseum.org.

Science Experiments

Make learning about science fun and easy with one of the least expensive materials known to humankind, paper. *100 Science Experiments with Paper* takes a hands-on approach to learning about air, balance, heat, chemistry, light, motion, math, water, and more. $14.95 plus $4 s&h from Sterling Publishing Co. Inc, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016 800/367-9692. On the Web at www.sterlingpub.com.

Women Leaders

Aung San Suu Kyi, Standing Up for Democracy in Burma is the first of a biographical series titled Women Changing the World. Students will discover Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, who rallied citizens against the oppression and poverty brought on by the totalitarian regime that took power in Burma in 1962. $9.95 plus $4 s&h from The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016 212/817-7915, fax 212/817-1593. On the Web at www.feministpress.org.

Bookpeople

Learn how to make visits from authors exciting with *Terrific Connections with Authors, Illustrators and Storytellers, Real Space*, and *Virtual Links*. From successfully choosing the right guest to using technology to maximize budgets, this book will help teachers and media specialists make professional presentations inspiring and productive. $26.50 plus $3 s&h from Libraries Unlimited, Inc. P.O. Box 6633 Englewood, CO 80155-6633 800/237-6124. On the web at www.lu.com.

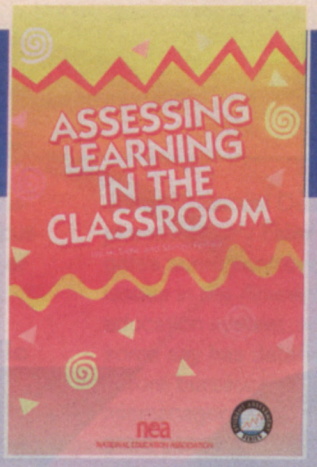
Home-School Communication

Make meaningful connections between the classroom and home with *Parent Power, Energizing Home-School Communication*. This comprehensive resource kit includes a rich collection of materials on a wide variety of topics, including reproducible essays in English and Spanish, tips for generating media attention for school outreach efforts, strategies for working with parent volunteers, and more. The book also includes a CD-ROM. $35 plus $4 s&h from Heinemann 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912 800/793-2154. On the Web at www.heinemann.com.

Music Education

You've seen the Grammy® Awards, now learn about the music business with Grammy in the Schools® Career Handbook. From interviews with artists to video directors to music therapists, students will learn the in's and out's of the "biz." Free plus $3 s&h from The NARAS Foundation, Education Division, 3402 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405. 301/392-3777. On the Web at www.grammy.com

NEW from the NEA Professional Library



Assessing Learning in the Classroom (Revised Edition)

Jay McTighe and Steven Ferrara. NEA Professional Library. 37 pp., $5.95, #2070-7-00-F

EXCERPT

The field of student assessment, from methodology and techniques to the use of results, is changing, affecting the work of education employees. These changes have created new options and new concerns, especially in the use of assessment results. The authors believe that the primary purpose of classroom-based assessment is to inform teaching and improve learning, not to sort students or to justify a grade. Effective classroom assessment is ongoing. Effective teachers recognize that assessment results can inform them about the effectiveness of their teaching as well as the degree of student learning.

Why do we test? The authors believe the primary purpose ought to be to inform teaching and improve learning. *Assessing Learning in the Classroom* offers hands-on information that can help demystify the testing process.

You'll find the principles of effective classroom assessment, key questions to ask in planning, a framework of different approaches and methods, new evaluation and communication methods, and a glossary of assessment terms. You'll also find sample rubrics and rating scales that can be adapted for a variety of content areas.

This first book in the NEA *Student Assessment Series* is a basic primer for educators interested in examining methods to effectively and fairly assess their students.

For more information or to order, check the Web at www.nea.org/books.

Thought Exercises

A Guide to Assist in the Development of Thinking Skills

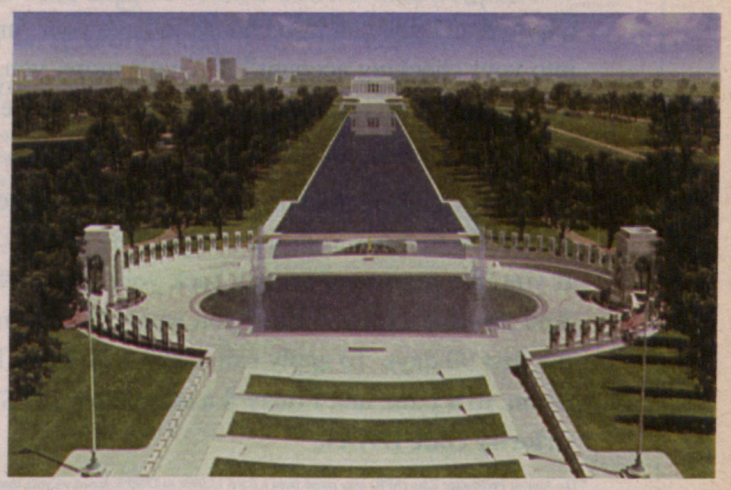
Phyllis Reed with foreword by Jack Canfield, president of Self Esteem Seminars. From setting goals to thinking about happiness, this book helps students develop necessary critical thinking skills. *Thought Exercises* will encourage students to explore the consequences of their actions, form opinions, and establish their own values. 82 pp., $15.95 plus 8 percent s&from P.O. Box 3247, Fullerton CA 92834, 714/447-0349.

TVTIPS

Dear Home: Letters from World War II

The History Channel,

Friday, March 17, 6-7 p.m. ET.



This documentary examines how Americans dealt with the emotional trauma of World War II by looking at actual letters written by servicemen and their loved ones at home. The program is presented in conjunction with The History Channel's ongoing Save Our History campaign to help raise funds for the planned World War II memorial (right) in Washington, D.C. For study guides and an online letter archive, as well as ways students can participate in Save Our History, visit historychannel.com/classroom or call 1-877-87-LEARN.

Say goodbye to your high-interest debt for good with the NEA's low personal loan rates!

Consolidate and save with rates as low as 11.99%.* Thanks to our low rates, you can now save up to hundreds of dollars a year in finance charges by consolidating your high-interest bills into one low monthly payment with the NEA Credit Plan® personal loan. Loan amounts range from $3,000 to $25,000**—all with a fixed Annual Percentage Rate (APR) as low as 11.99%. There is no collateral required and you can also choose to have your funds deposited directly into your checking account.*** What's more, you can even apply by phone and **receive a loan decision in as little as 15 minutes!**

Enjoy flexible terms and no payments for 90 days.† With the NEA Credit Plan personal loan, you can choose between 24 to 84 months to repay your loan, depending on how much you borrow. If you like, you can even pay back your loan early with no penalty. And now for a limited time, you won't have to make any payments for the first 90 days. To apply call **1-800-545-4094,** Monday–Thursday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST) and mention **priority code DWAV.**

Fixed Monthly Payment Plan

Loan Amount	Term: 24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months	72 months	84 months
$3,000	$147	$104	$82	N/A	N/A	N/A
$10,000	$488	$344	$273	$231	N/A	N/A
$15,000	N/A	$516	$409	$346	$304	N/A
$25,000	N/A	$860	$682	$576	$506	$457

These estimated payments are based on an Annual Percentage Rate (APR) of 11.99%.* Your APR may be higher. Actual payment amount and term may vary.†

Call 1-800-545-4094

and mention priority code DWAV today to receive your loan decision in as little as 15 minutes.

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*The Annual Percentage Rate (APR) may range from a fixed 11.99% to 17.99%, based on your income and creditworthiness. If you are not approved for the lowest available APR under this program and MBNA is unable to contact you, all funds may be sent to you in check form for your endorsement.

**Receipt of the maximum credit line is subject to MBNA America's income and creditworthiness standards.
There is a check transaction fee equal to 1% of the U.S. Dollar amount of each check you use to obtain an advance (fee: minimum $2; maximum $10).

***Upon approval, MBNA will send funds as requested. The total amount requested cannot exceed your credit line. If it does, and MBNA cannot contact you, all approved amounts may be sent to you in check form for your endorsement. Allow at least two weeks processing time from account opening. **Please continue to make payments to your creditors until you receive MBNA payment confirmation from those creditors.**

† Your repayment term begins at the end of the 90-day deferral period. All payments are deferred for three months after the purchase date. Finance charges continue to accrue. You may prepay at anytime without penalty.
The NEA Credit Plan personal loan has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership that person and their family may no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Credit Plan personal loan program. If eligible, a replacement loan may be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.
The NEA is not involved in the credit application process. All applications are subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. The account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.
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Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.
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TV TIPS

Between the Lions
Monday-Friday, 10:30-11 am ET, premieres April 3. Targeted to beginning readers aged 4-7, this new program uses a combination of music, stories, animation, live-action, and puppetry to introduce kids to the joys of reading. The program features a family of lions who run a library where books, words, and story characters come to life, making the reading process accessible and entertaining for young viewers. Designed with the help of teachers and literacy experts, the program's core curriculum is supported by an extensive outreach network of educational organizations. The companion site, pbskids.org/lions, includes details about these outreach partners as well as interactive games and stories, songs, recommended book lists, and educational support for teachers and parents.

The Ultimate Guide: Human Body
Discovery Channel, Monday, March 20, 9-10 pm ET. This visually striking documentary takes viewers inside the functioning of bones, skin, eyes, ears, and the brain, using microscopic and endoscopic filming, extreme close-ups, computer-generated graphics, and MRI scans of brain activity to reveal how the overall human mechanism functions. The program examines such phenomena as the connection between sense and emotion, the production of DNA in the cell, and the brain's unique adaptability. Visit discovery.com/school for lesson plans and more information on the "Ultimate Guide" series.

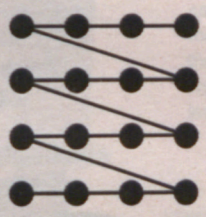
Dying To Be Thin
PBS, Tuesday, March 21, 9-10 pm ET, check local listings. This episode of the documentary series NOVA examines the growing problem of eating disorders among young girls in the United States. Millions of Americans each year suffer from anorexia, bulimia, or binge-eating disorders in pursuit of an impossible body image. Most keep their disorders secret, creating a high risk of serious complications or death. This program considers the complex social and health-related factors that lead to eating disorders and the therapies that can help bring relief. Visit www.pbs.org/nova for lesson ideas, teachers' discussion, and transcripts for all NOVA programs.

Education: A Public Right Gone Wrong
PBS, Friday, March 24, 9-10 pm ET, check local listings. In this edition of the provocative current events series "National Desk," journalist Larry Elder investigates some controversial issues in the American public education system, which some say has deteriorated before bureaucracy and mismanagement. The program considers proposed reforms from all sides, including school choice, public vouchers, charter schools, private scholarships, home schooling, and tax credits.

Scientific American Frontiers: Mediterranean on the Rocks
PBS, Tuesday, March 28, 8-9 pm ET, check local listings. This ecological and archaeo-

✳ COMMUNICATION.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

A positive relationship cannot exist without communication. Research shows that kids believe they have valuable things to say. When teachers or mentors ask them and listen genuinely, **it helps build self-esteem and confidence.** Also it demonstrates that you value a relationship with them and support their intelligence and burgeoning independence. The important thing to remember about drugs is that **it's not a five minute talk. It's a dialogue.** As kids grow, they will need more information relevant to their exposure. In general, smoking marijuana is harmful. The younger a kid is, the more it may be. Research shows that people who smoke it before age 15 **are 7 times more likely to use other drugs.** It also shows that people who didn't smoke marijuana by age 21 were more likely to never smoke it. For more information, visit www.theantidrug.com or call 800.788.2800.



Communication is connection. During their teenage years, kids are exposed to an ever widening variety of people and influences. You are one of the most important. Tell kids that you care about them. Praise them when they do well, no matter how small the accomplishment. Stay connected.

Getting to know kids and letting them know you is one of the most effective drug deterrents. Through their teenage years, this is not always easy. Even still, research shows that kids still want this to happen, even as they are exploring and growing into their own individuality. So take time every day to listen to them and build your relationship. This message is brought to you by the Office of National Drug Control Policy/Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

Let's make candidates measure up for children and public education

With the 2000 elections coming up, we need to know which candidates are – and aren't – supporting the issues that have a positive impact on children, public schools, and education professionals.

That's why before the NEA recommends any candidates, we make sure they measure up on the issues we care about:

- **Strengthening Public Education**
  Increased funding for schools and colleges, opposing vouchers and privatization, and modernizing school facilities.

- **Ensuring Children's Health & Safety**
  Supporting safe schools programs, continuing Head Start, and increasing health and nutrition programs.

- **Maximizing Student Learning**
  Smaller class sizes, early childhood education, programs for disadvantaged children, vocational education, college scholarships, school-to-work, and updating technology.

- **Respecting School Employees**
  Higher salaries to keep the best employees, inclusion in decision making, and increased funding for professional development and professional growth.

NEA Election 2000:

Making Sure Candidates Listen To Us.

Your Voice Is Important... Let us know what you think by visiting our Web site @ **www.nea.org/lac**

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

logical profile of the Mediterranean Sea explores its role in the history of civilization, the varieties of life it supports, and the environmental threats it faces. Host Alan Alda joins scientists as they search for a dangerous species of algae, build an ancient style of reed boat from natural papyrus, and search for shipwrecks in high-tech subs. Visit www.pbs.org/saf for teachers' materials and transcripts for all Scientific American programs.

30x30 Kid Flicks

HBO Family, Daily, 4:30-5 pm ET. This half-hour series features short films, videos, and animated pieces written, produced, and directed by kids aged 8-18. The program demonstrates how effective filmmaking can be as a means of expression when children are encouraged to create their own innovative dramas, comedies, and documentaries. The programs also go behind the scenes to examine the young filmmakers' techniques, and the companion site, www.hbo4kids.com, offers advice and suggestions for viewers interested in creating their own films.

Women's History Month Biographies

A&E, weekdays throughout March, 7-8 am ET, check local listings. To help celebrate Women's History Month, A&E Classroom is offering several "Biography" programs about important women in history and American culture, including Anne Frank, Amelia Earhart, Madeleine Albright, Gloria Steinem, Cleopatra, Susan B. Anthony, Helen Thomas, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Helen Keller. Study guides with program descriptions, vocabulary lists, discussion questions, and activities are available for many of the programs at www.aetv.com/class.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Delilah's Dilemma

Are there itchy heads in the classroom? Delilah's Dilemma, written by a school nurse and NEA member, can help young students learn about head lice and how to prevent it as Delilah effectively deals with the often emotional issue. $7 plus $2 s&h from Helen Locke, 4988 Beechwood Dr., Greenville, OH 45331, 937/548-0803.

Fruit and Veggie Music

It's cool to eat fruits and vegetables with Dole's new "Jammin' 5 A Day Songs" cassette tape. A blend of rap, hip/hop, gospel, and pop songs promises to get elementary school kids excited about eating fruits and vegetables. Free. Send a request on school letterhead to DOLE Food Company, 155 Bovet Road, Suite 476, San Mateo, CA 94402. On the Web at www.dole5aday.com.

Dry Ice Investigations

In a series of 11 sessions, sixth through eighth graders can learn how to conduct their own dry ice science experiments with Dry Ice Investigations. The guide also helps solve the logistical problems of obtaining and storing dry ice for the classroom. $21 plus $4 s&h from Great Explorations in Math & Science, University of California Lawrence Hall of Science, Berkeley, CA 94720-5200, 510/642-7771, fax 510/643-0309.

Weather

The biggest weather phenomenon of the century is explained in the book *El Niño and La Niña*. As part of a series of books about weather from the Weather Channel, colorful pictures and easy-to-understand language help students understand this unusual weather occurrence. $3.99 plus $3.62 s&h from Simon & Schuster, 100 Front St., Riverside, NJ 08075, 800/223-2348. On the Web at www.simonsayskids.com.

Education Reform

Explore Kentucky's statewide student assessment and high-stakes teacher accountability program with *Accountability, Assessment, and Teacher Commitment, Lessons from Kentucky's Reform Efforts*. Policy makers, school administrators, teachers, teacher educators, parents, and more will learn about the classroom realities as well as the consequences of state-mandated reform. $21.95 plus $3.50 s&h from SUNY Press c/o CUP Services, P.O. Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14851, 607/277-2211. On the Web at www.sunypress.edu.

DIVERSITY Calendar

July

Anniversary of the Signing of the A.D.A., July 26
July 26 marks the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act that occurred in 1990, which brings civil rights to persons with disabilities. It provides for reasonable accommodation in work situations and also provides standards for physical accessibility to buildings and public transportation for people with disabilities. On the Web at http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm.

Pioneer Day, July 24
Also known as Days of 47, Mormons celebrate Pioneer Day to honor the U.S. pioneers who came across the plains to Utah. It commemorates the first settlement, led by Brigham Young in 1874. It is celebrated with parades and reminiscing about the pioneers and one's ancestors. On the Web at http://www.uvol.com/pioneer/homepage.html.

August

Korean Liberation Day, August 15
Korean Liberation Day is celebrated for different reasons by North and South Korea. In North Korea, this celebration marks the surrender of Japan in 1945, ending WWII and the Japanese rule of Korea. In South Korea, it marks the surrender and also the creation of an independent government.

Women's Equality Day, August 26
Women's Equality Day in the U.S. was set aside in 1974 to honor the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, which granted women the right to vote. On the Web at http://www.feminist.org/other/wed.html.

Sept.

Hispanic Heritage Month
Hispanic Heritage Month, from September 15 to October 15, celebrates the contribution of Hispanic-Americans to our society. According to the U.S. Census Bureau about 20 million people in the United States are of Hispanic origin. Teaching about the contributions of Latinos helps students understand the ethnic diversity of the country and builds pride for the Hispanic community. Educator resources on the web at http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson023.shtml.

Citizenship Day, September 17
Citizenship Day honors the more than 100,000 people from other countries who become U.S. citizens each year. President Harry Truman, in 1952, moved the day from May to September 17th because this day is the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787. This day also celebrates the Constitution because it is not only the Supreme Law of the Land, but also one of the oldest working documents in the world. On the Web at http://www.patriotism.org/citizenship/.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Take Our Daughters To Work Day

Ms. Foundation for Women
TAKE OUR DAUGHTERS TO WORK®

April 27, 2000, marks the eighth annual Take Our Daughters to Work Day. This year, the Ms. Foundation for Women is offering new tools for teachers to incorporate issues of work, family, caring, and student's own personal and professional goals in the classroom.

The Working It Out series is designed primarily for students aged 9-15, but can easily be adapted to meet the needs of older or younger students. It contains two guidebooks with lesson plans and activities. *Class Activities for Coeducational Groups* consists of exercises that address the needs and concerns of girls and boys.

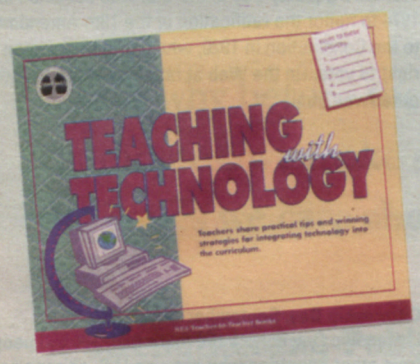
With more than 19 million girls across the nation at their parent or mentor's workplace, many boys will remain in the classroom. The second book, *Especially for Boys*, contains specific activities that teachers can use to address the particular issues or concerns of boys that may arise as part of the educational activities associated with Take Our Daughters to Work Day. $10 for the two books plus $4 s&h. Ms. Foundation for Women, P.O. Box 890350 Charlotte, NC 28289. 212/742-2300.

For more information on Take Our Daughters to Work Day, visit http://ms.foundation.org.

STOP Teaching *Like You're Still in the 20th Century*

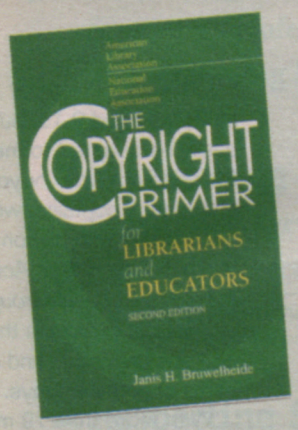
A great resource for your district's or school's technology committee!

Maybe this is the year you resolved to finally use a computer without hyperventilating. Or maybe you're the one colleagues come to with all their computer problems—but you could use some fresh ideas for integrating technology into the curriculum. Whether you're a computer whiz or the Internet makes you dizzy, the NEA Professional Library has a special package of books to help you use technology more effectively.



The first book in the package, *Teaching with Technology,* tackles the tough question: How do you integrate technology into the curriculum in a meaningful way? If you're ready to stop teaching *about* technology and start using it as a learning tool for core subjects, this book is the guide you've been waiting for. Let NEA members show you how they revamped instruction to make technology a meaningful part of their teaching.

Concerned about making sure all the kids in your school become techno-savvy? In *Technology for Diverse Learners,* educators who work with ESL and at-risk students explain how computers and video technology can succeed where traditional methods fall short.



Is is okay to copy an image from someone's Web site and put it on your class's site? Have you heard rumblings from the district office about distance learning? *The Copyright Primer* is an indispensable reference tool to help you do the right thing with new media.

And, finally, here's a book to help you figure out how to pay for all these new tools. In *How To Get Grants and Free Stuff,* classroom teachers demystify the grant writing process for you and share ideas for tapping into freebies.

Buy all FOUR and pay FOR THREE!

Priced separately, these books would cost $49.85
—but this Technology Package is available at a special price of
$39.90 for NEA Members ($47.90 for nonmembers).
Item #2175-4-00-D.

Order the Technology Package online at www.nea.org/books or call 800/229-4200.

shipping & handling will be added to all orders.

NEA Professional Library • Distribution Center • P.O. Box 2035 • Annapolis Junction, MD 20701

French Teacher Conference

The second annual French Teaching Methodology and Quebec Culture Program will be held on June 25 through July 2, 2000, in Montreal and Quebec City. This conference is intended for teachers and future teachers of French who would like the opportunity to master a variety of teaching methods and to create instructional activities integrated with Quebec culture. All courses and participant interaction will be conducted entirely in French. Undergraduate, graduate, and in-service credits are available. $50 advanced registration is required. The $750 program fee is due by June 25, 2000. On the Web at http://homepages.together.net/~lhostel. For more information, call Elizabeth White, 518/561-0093 or E-mail lhostel@ together.net.

Budding Inventors

This summer students across the country will run wild with their imaginations at a camp designed to inspire new creations. Camp Invention is a hands-on, one-week camp that is designed for children entering second through sixth grades. More than 400 schools nationwide will partner with the program to inspire inventiveness in more than 27,000 campers this summer. Working together, the Camp Invention program provides the curriculum, materials, training, central reservation system, marketing, and staff compensation, while local host schools provide the space and the staff. Campers develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills through five fun-filled, activity-oriented thematic modules that integrate science, math, history, and the arts. For more information visit them on the Web at http://www.invent.org.

Census 2000

Stand up and be counted! "Making Sense of Census 2000" is this year's Census in the Schools Project and offers a number of resources for educators, students, and even principals to make learning about the Census fun and exciting. The goal of the project is to develop awareness, participation, and support of Census 2000, which, among many things, helps determine the allocation of resources for schools. The Census Bureau, in conjunction with Scholastic Inc., offers a kit for principals to help encourage teachers and parents to be involved in the counting of America's people. The project also includes free materials available to teachers such as lesson plans, a giant wall map of the United States, and a teacher's guide with grade-specific materials. All educational materials are available on the Web at http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/schindex.htm. Or Contact Scholastic/Census 2000. 555 Broadway, Room 478, New York, NY 10012, 800/296-5923, Fax 212/343-4867.

Embrace Space

Blast off into an exciting adventure in the cosmos on Space Day 2000. May 7 is the fourth annual celebration of the achievements, benefits, and opportunities of space exploration. Senator John Glenn invites students in grades 4 through 6 to climb aboard a comprehensive learning experience in cyberspace to celebrate the day called Design Challenges. From February 1 through March 31, students in teams of four tackle any of three space problems: space walk talk, water recycle, and x-treme fitness. On May 7, schools from around the globe will join a Web cast online to show off their "stellar" solutions. For complete descriptions of the Design Challenges and how to send your students' results to Challenger Center for official recognition, log-on to http://www.spaceday.com.

WEB WINNERS

Fun With Forests

"Wood" You Believe It? Trees are one of our greatest natural resources and now you can investigate them online with a new Web site. Developed for grades 4 through 5, Educational in Nature is designed to foster understanding and environmental awareness in the classroom. A Forest Is..., Birds & Forests, From the Forest, and the Forester's Job are the four topics explored with teacher guides, activities, and words to know sections. On the Web at http://www.gp.com/ Educationalin Nature.

Amazing Space

Interested in learning more about space? The Association for Research in Astronomy teams scientists and K-12 educators with this site. Featuring a galaxy of links and teaching resources on the Hubble Space Telescope, planets, stars, and more, this Web site is a must-see for those interested in grants, education projects, and the latest news from outerspace. You'll also find a link to apply for the Space Telescope Science Institute Education Outreach Program. It is a yearlong internship for secondary education teachers developing educational programs with the organization's Outreach Office. The deadline to apply is March 20, 2000. On the Web at http://oposite.stsci.edu/pubinfo/edugroup/educational-activities.html.

Study Guides and Strategies

Often a student's ability to master writing and studying is the key to success. *Study Guides and Strategies* is an online manual to help teach students how to learn. These tips and tricks can assist with test taking, studying, writing essays, participating in the classroom, and more. High self-esteem is as easy as the click of a button. On the Web at http://www.iss.stthomas.edu/studyguides/.

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in the Light Lane

Making War On Words

After an especially grueling eighth-grade basketball game, I was listening to my players complain about the game. I stressed all season not to blame the referees, yet one point guard moaned about calls that should have been made.

"Remember," I told her, "referees won't see everything. After all, they're only human.They aren't infallible."

After a moment of silence and puzzled looks, I asked, "You know what infallible means, don't you?"

The point guard replied, "Yes Coach, it's when someone doesn't make any fouls."

Nancy Murphy
Fort Huachuca, Arizona

As a high school English teacher, I don't usually see the "creative" spelling that is common among younger students. Two recent examples, though, got past "spellcheck."

One was the person who graduates at the top of the class: the "Valid Victorian!"

The second was "alphadeta" —affidavit! Now you know why I read aloud while grading papers!

Maryellen O'Shea
Flemington, New Jersey

A student came up to me and said, "Mrs. Bowen, my grandpa is really sick."

I said, "Oh, I'm sorry. What's wrong?"

He replied, "He has tombstones in his stomach!"

Linda Bowen
Mannford, Oklahoma

Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

Makeup Mavens

On the afternoon I distributed class portraits, the principal announced that picture make-up day would be coming soon for those who either missed picture day or would like to have re-takes.

I didn't think I needed to give any more information to my second-graders. They were a bright group and seemed to be paying attention.

But when Friday came, I noticed that two of the girls in my class came wearing eye shadow, rouge, and fingernail polish. Some of the students in the room began teasing these two girls.

Before I could intervene, one of the made-up girls approached me.

"Mr. Lutz," she said, in tears, "didn't the principal say that today was makeup day?"

I didn't know whether to burst out laughing or cry.

Jeff Lutz
Salem, Oregon

I have my fifth graders start every day writing in their journals for 10 minutes. Two weeks ago the question was: How do you know when you are a grown-up? One young man wrote: "You know you're a grown-up when you have a job and you have arthritis."

Kathy Crook
Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

My high school world civilization class was in the computer lab researching information for a paper. A freshman was researching the Egyptian queen Cleopatra and came across many pieces of art dedicated to the Queen of the Nile.

He looked up to me and lamented: "I can't find any good pictures of Cleopatra. She's naked in all of these."

Jerry McDermid
Angola, Indiana

I am an elementary school counselor, and every school year, with first, second, and third graders, I do an activity I call "The United Shades of America." We match our skin color to "people color" paints and paint portraits and walls, make hand print murals, and celebrate who we are and how we look.

The colors are called everything from cinnamon and peach to mahogany and toast. When one third grader's skin color matched the "wheat" color, he became so excited, he hollered, "I'm finally Student of the Wheat."

JoMarie Privitera
Buffalo, New York

In the last minute of two of my classes I tried to make small talk. One day I told the class I was going to dye my hair. The class wag spoke up: "You're too late, Mr. Flood. Your hair's already died."

Thomas Flood
Westminster, Maryland

One of the vocabulary words in my sixth grade English class was "regime." On a worksheet, I asked my students, "Would you rather live in a democratic regime or a regime run by Saddam Hussein? Why?"

One student wrote, "I would rather live in a regime run by Saddam Hussein because I don't want to be a Democrat."

Dawn Arbogast
Tracy, California

In my fifth grade social studies class, while studying about riverboats, we spent class time making boats from Popsicle sticks.

The students were working in groups, and two girls were sitting on the floor by my desk. As I listened, I found out their boat was named "S.S. Friends." The first girl told her friend that she named the boat because they had worked on it together. She went on to explain that boats always have an "S.S." The second girl asked what the "S.S." meant, and her friend told her that it stood for social studies!

Karen Lee
Florence, Kentucky

One year, after Christmas, I told my kindergarten class we would learn how to write our last names. One child looked very perplexed. I asked why. He replied: "But this is the only name I have ever had."

Barb Hirschy
Huntington, Indiana

My kindergarten class had heard me say, on several different occasions, that I would be retiring at the end of the school year. During spring registration, my class spotted a little boy many of them knew, whose parents were registering him for the next year. They asked me if he could join us in the classroom while his parents were filling out all the paperwork.

As we were settling down to hear a story, one of my children said to me, "Will he be in your class next year?" Before I could answer, another student replied: "Oh no, he can't be in Mrs. Dunlop's class. She's going to recycle!" I just wanted you to know that the first six months of "recyclement" have been terrific!

Susan Dunlop
Yuba City, California

I was testing my eleventh grade students on Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which is written in Middle English. One of the questions on the test was to answer in which kind of English this piece of literature was written. One of my enterprising juniors wrote: "broken English."

Karen Bailin
Cranford, New Jersey

"Oh no, not homework again."

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